

Liberalism Series - Abstracts

Facts of Election

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A. The swing of the pendulum in normal times, politically speaking, results in a loss during the off-year election of seats held by the majority party, whose leader is in the White House. The extent of this normal loss has been on an average a drop from about 60% of the membership of the House to about 48% of the membership of the House. Figured in number of seats rather than in percentages the loss has been on the average about 48 seats lost in the House by the majority party. In the Senate, where only part of the membership is elected at any one time, the same record of losses in off-year as contrasted with presidential-year elections cannot be ascertained with any profit.

B. Democratic hopes at the past election were based on this history of the swing of the pendulum. Those hopes were varied according to the nature and frankness of the speaker, but so far as I know, the most optimistic Democrats expected to lose about 24 seats, or half the normal average, in the House and to gain only four or five, perhaps seven, seats in the Senate.

C. Actual results

Democrats gained 9 seats in the Senate (instead of 5 to 7).

Democrats gained 13 seats in the House (instead of losing 24).

The New Deal gained even more seats than those taken by Democrats for the Farmer-Labor members, one in the Senate and three in the House, and the Progressive Party, one in the Senate and seven in the House, may be counted on for New Deal support.

The standing of the parties is now:

In the Senate:

Democrats	69
Republicans	25
Farmer-Labor	1
Progressive	1
Democratic majority	42 (5 more than a 2/3 majority)

In the House:

Democrats	322
Republicans	103
Farmer-Labor	3
Progressive	7
Democratic majority	209 (32 more than 2/3 majority)

Such record-breaking capturing of seats naturally brought its phenomenal upsets which attracted the major attention. The loss of Pennsylvania by the Republicans was almost as big a story as the Lindbergh kidnapping, which is said in many newspaper offices to be the biggest story since the Crucifixion.

In this enthusiasm of looking at results of election, for the results are really what matters, little attention is given the popular vote. If it had been given last week, the jubilation of overwhelming victory in getting seats by the Democrats would have been tinged with some soberness over the decided drop in the popular majority given the Democrats last week in comparison with the majority given the party in 1932. The majority in 1932 was 18% of the total vote; in 1934 it was 11% of the total vote. Democrats explain this as the result of southern states not voting in a meaningless election.

D. Sidelights of results

Nebraska amended the State Constitution to provide a unicameral, or one-chamber, legislature. (Mr. Leigh's report that Vermont had one until ?)

Six states voted on repeal. Five were substantially wet. Only Kansas was dry. West Virginia, Florida, Nebraska, Idaho, Wyoming, wet.

Several states voted relief bond issues.

Tammamy returned.

Legalized horse race betting was voted in Massachusetts, in Nebraska and perhaps in other places.

E. The personnel of Republicans elected indicates that only a handful, as Austin of Vermont, were elected on an anti-New Deal platform. Such men as Vandenberg or Cutting might be called New Dealers more than some of the Democrats whose party labels bore them in. This perhaps indicates that in the main the New Deal opposition was not a help to the Republicans.

No real contest is shown by the abnormal results. Since both the actual results of the voting and the still substantial popular majority gave the Democrats and New Dealers such an extraordinary control, the election could hardly be called an election in any real sense of the word. It was a vote, but hardly an electoral choice. It might be well, then, to look into the background of the vote last Tuesday to see if there is any major reason for the absence of a real contest. Such a survey will consist of summarizing very briefly the political situation as it existed before last Tuesday.

The help from Washington in watering the garden of votes was an unquestionable factor in the results. This was not reprehensible in any way unless you consider the American party system an evil, and if you consider the American party system an evil then you must condemn party government as it is practiced in representative democracy anywhere--which no doubt some of you are quite ready to do. But in the United States, we can hardly take seriously the horrified exposure by the Republicans that the Democrats are playing politics. What the Republicans really mean is that the Democrats are scoundrels for playing politics and, therefore, should let the Republicans get in so they can play politics for a time.

The manner in which the Democrats have used their success of 1932 to promote their future success is well known to all. I go over the list of outstanding examples here only as review:

I. The President's own campaign

- a. Swing through the country after his Hawaii vacation.
- b. Radio talks on National Parks and N R A.
- c. Reorganization of N R A to soothe the anti-N R A crowd.
- d. The "I'm not a bogey-man" speeches to allay the pathetic fears of business men: i.e., the anti-bonus message to calm wealth, the Bingham trial balloon in England advocating pegging the dollar and pound and intimating some degree of stabilization, and the President's address to the bankers in which he accepted the profit system but forced, in a subtle and well-gloved hand, the bankers to suspend their bitter campaign against him.
- e. The giving of Presidential approval: Bob LaFollette, Lehman, Hiram Johnson, Mrs. O'Day via Mrs. Roosevelt; and most peculiar of all, entertaining Guffey and Earle at luncheon and at a formal dinner and promising Pennsylvania generous bounty.
- f. Showing discreet consideration for propertied classes and political tack in withholding support from Sinclair, whose victory or defeat either one would have been embarrassing to the White House if it had smiled on him.

II. Mr. Farley's campaign

- a. As a man of hope and good will.
 - 1. 250,000 "personal" letters to workers in the vineyard, written in the best manner of a good Elk

and a brother. A green-ink postscript in Genial Jim's own hand - placed upon the letters with a rubber stamp.

2. Telegrams of encouragement and congratulations to candidates. (The ludicrous mishaps of some of Mr. Farley's own campaign might have been serious in any other year. The familiar mistake of a clerk, apparently Mr. Hurja who is hardly a clerk, in sending a green-ink exhortation to a worker in California telling him to work for Sinclair, and wiring congratulations to Governor Ritchie on his victory just after Governor Ritchie had recognized his defeat.)

b. Mr. Farley as the Great Employer

It is not necessary here to go into the power of patronage in holding a party together. Its importance is known to all who have ever attended a ward meeting or gone to the council of party workers in a city, where these matters are discussed with sophisticated frankness.

You are familiar with the manner in which patronage reaches to the very sub-soil of party activity and forms the roots of a machine that works constantly for maintaining power while the electorate, and the ordinary citizen, thinks of other things than politics. The job-holder in the smallest unit of political geography is in his job because some friend requested it. Both he and the friend are obligated to work for the party or person who gave the job. They work while non-job holders go about their own affairs and let the work

of democracy be performed by those more interested in it.

The best evidence of the power of patronage (and by patronage I mean both the giving of jobs and the giving of favors) is the depleted condition of the Republican party and the lack of campaigning power on the New York Fusionists. The Republicans in the past election would have been handicapped in any event. If they had had anything effective to say, there would have been so little money to pay for getting the message distributed and also very few earnest workers to carry the message. The New York Fusionists were defeated because they have refused to use patronage for the mere sake of building up a machine, while Tammany has still not been out of office long enough to suffer the dissolution that would eventually take place. Tammany's hopes were sufficiently strong to make its workers ardent.

III. The Santa Claus role of Washington ("Who would kill Santa Claus?")

a. The effects of spending money have permeated the observation of great numbers:

November relief allotments to states \$135,812,954.
Persons (not families) on relief in Sept., 16,649,071.
AAA checks are moving in millions of dollars.

Industrial workers, while not given direct money, have been given repeated promises of support in their fights with employers - and perhaps have been given support in comparison to what previous administrations did for them, though not as much support as the unions think they should have.

b. To realize the effects of this beneficence we must look beyond the outcries of the industrialists and bankers. The United States is in a considerable part west of Jersey City. In fact out there the people think of New York City as an alien minority at times. And out there is where the election last Tuesday was held - not in Wall Street nor in the American Manufacturers' Association.

In the great America Federal bounty has had its effect in the very lives of the voters:

Corn and hog states had 500,000 farmers voting 2 to 1 to continue the corn-hog reduction program in a referendum conducted by Secretary Wallace;

Cotton states only evidence of prosperity comes from reduction checks and higher prices, and results are evident in new consumer purchases.

Sheep and wool region has relief from three years of cashless existence and desperation.

In village life, where the physical features of the town are as intimate as one's own feet, the changes for the better have come from Mr. Roosevelt.

In city life, where individuals are less familiar with the small features of the earth's decoration, the effect of Federal expenditures is felt in nearly any middle class family who has a relative or who knows some friend to be gainfully employed again, or who feels that union activity is not futile.

These people who have had the New Deal in evidence at their doors, who have seen the New Deal's effects at their firesides, who have acquired (perhaps brief and perhaps false though it be) a sense of security again - these voted last week.

New Deal not an issue yet.

It follows from the effect of the New Deal in individual lives that the program in itself was not an issue in the last election. There is an increasing questioning of the plan in the public, as shown both by the last Literary Digest poll and by the decreased popular majority given the Democrats last week, but the time has not yet come when the voting public is ready to cast away what is giving at least an immediate security, even though it be a mere sedative for a pain that will be all the more acute when the day of reckoning comes. At least eating the New Deal bread and beans is more tangible than

trying to eat and digest the Constitution, which, as Senator Borah pointed out, is all the Republicans offered to replace the New Deal assurance, not proved yet in the long run, that no American shall starve.

Americans certainly do not take the New Deal without question. They perhaps do not approve of spending more when we are broke, for that procedure is a violation of the Calvinistic injunctions of thrift. They probably suspect enormous graft in the administration of public funds, for it seems to be habitual with Americans to suspect the motives and integrity of men in public office. They resent or deplore the higher commodity prices. Some fear higher taxes or inflation or both. But they have hesitated to desert the New Deal until something better than outraged and apoplectic denunciations are offered to replace it. Surely only the Republican party leaders with their completely impenetrable habits of thought and speech would have been so naive as to think that the Constitution and threats of regimentation could rouse a fighting spirit among people who never have known much personal liberty and who are enjoying the sort of regimentation they now have much more than they enjoyed the type of regimentation they knew under the late Republican administration.

Yet the Republican campaign offered only the choice between the New Deal, with a comfortable present and an uncertain future, and the Constitutional liberty that no one remembers ever having had - except perhaps those privileged few who would benefit in the liberty defined by Anatole France as being the right of the rich to sleep on park benches just the same as the poor.

But what of the broad significance of the election?

The evidence that the New Deal is not yet a political issue is the immediate significance of the election itself. I think the results of last week can also be examined for possible broader significance, that is, for

future events whose shadows appeared last week.

This election, as well as any general election, can be surveyed for evidence of the following:

- a. The appearance or emphasis of an issue that will hold over into future elections.
- b. The appearance or standardization of new techniques in campaigning.
- c. The indication of moral trends in the public mind (for moral opinion has been a very definite force in American politics).
- d. Evidence of a new alignment of parties.

A. Issues that were presented in certain local elections and that may conceivably remain for future solution are:

1. Old-age pensions. Twenty-six states now have some form of old-age pension. The problem was prominent in the California campaign, where Sinclair promised \$50 a month to old people and forced Merriam to promise "to give consideration" to the fantastic Townsend Plan. There has been talk already of a national plan for old-age pensions. Perhaps the emphasis on the subject in the California campaign will add to the growing interest throughout the nation and some national plan will follow.

2. The Debtor Demands, calling for redistribution of wealth.

- a. Upton Sinclair's Epic plan called for taxing the rich. It was supported by over 800,000 good middle class and proletarian voters who will remain in the population of California. Mr. Sinclair was not defeated on his plan but by the combined powers of all the Tories in a campaign that will rarely be equalled for unfairness and deliberate lying about the opposing candidate - not a campaign against his program but against his person. Since he was not defeated on his program and since the successful Republican was forced to make overtures to liberalism in order to get elected, it is evident that Epic was by no means

considered mere fantasy by the majority of Californians. The residue of believers in Epic, or in other words, in the redistribution of wealth and a planned economy to solve unemployment, may, if they retain their faith, force some action in the future. The Tories of California are acutely aware of the grave danger in the system which allows citizens to propose and pass laws by themselves in case a sufficient number wants a law and the legislature refuses to act. They are sad too over the power the citizens have of recalling a governor from office. All in all it looks as if the old-guard Republican Tory who is now governor will have to meet the demands of the great unwashed poor to a disagreeable extent or will have to be exceedingly skilled in pretending to - and he has never shown evidence of having much political skill.

b. Farmer-Labor victory in Minnesota and the return of the LaFollettes to the two major offices in Wisconsin indicate that the embattled farmers of the northwestern middle west are not through fighting the interests. The New Deal is an old story in Wisconsin. They were demanding and getting a new deal in state government before Rexford Tugwell had been to college and learned the injustice of it all. They are still thinking beyond the New Deal and the force of experience in those states may spread to other states and to the nation so that a New Deal that really means a drastic change in the distribution of wealth will eventually be proposed.

c. What of the South? Three years ago, before Huey Long had allowed his private life at a Long Island club to become public, I thought he might some day be President. He was appealing at that time to the same discontent that elected Franklin Roosevelt, and I still think it was only by the charity of God that we got as a result of the wave of discontentment a man such as Mr. Roosevelt instead of a Huey Long. The demands for a redistribution of

wealth are increasing in the South, become more vociferous, and we have the possibility of seeing them spread to other sections and combine with similar demands. As evidence of their increase we have Mississippi sending to the Senate a demagog of the worst order who promises to out-Huey Huey Long and we have Mr. Long himself successful in having adopted in Louisiana constitutional amendments allowing an income tax to make effective his "share of the wealth" program and abolishing the poll tax so that thousands of backwoods poor will now be able to vote. The future of this apparent trend in the South will speak for itself. I cite it here merely as a possible issue in subsequent elections.

B. Appearance or standardization or reappearance of new techniques in campaigning.

1. Standardization of the use of amplifying trucks for speech-making. Huey Long was a pioneer in this technique. This time many candidates used it.

2. Sale of pamphlets. Upton Sinclair in California and John B. Chapple, Republican candidate for Governor in Wisconsin, sold pamphlets to raise campaign funds. A renewal of old technique perhaps.

3. Not a new occurrence nor a standardization, but a return to the old techniques of the Populists and Greenbacks of the late 19th century was the religious appeal in the California campaign. Sinclair's following arose from religious fervor - from the Bellamy club's Christian socialism, from the Southern California church of technocracy (which was not an economic plan but a religion in Southern California), from the Utopian Societies.

Utopian Society plan: numbers instead of names, initiation fee, series of three or four pageants revealing the progress of a poor

man toward economic salvation in Utopia. The poor man is oppressed and hindered by the rich all along his path. Membership estimated at 100,000 and more. Society supported Sinclair.

The Republicans in California also made a religious appeal in placing the horrendous accusation of atheism on Sinclair. They quoted especially passages from his book "The Profits of Religion" to show that he was anti-Christ.

He countered this charge by composing a prayer in which he appeared as being on very intimate terms with the Deity and even enjoying His support and counsel in the Epic campaign.

This is all very similar to the old Populist campaigns when biblical support was cited on all sides for the regulation of railroads, the busting of trusts, and printing money.

C. Moral Trends

It is a platitude to point out that the moral attitude of any American public will soon express itself in legislation. We are a people incapable of letting the enforcement of mores and taboos be an informal matter. We pass a law - which usually remains long after the moral opinion which produced it has changed.

As evidence of which direction the present wind of moral opinion is blowing elections are good weather vanes. In the one last week, for example, five out of six states which voted on the subject voted to repeal their dry laws. Massachusetts and Nebraska voted to allow pari-mutuel betting and legalized race tracks.

Many of us were afraid that the recent flowering of the League of Decency and its impressive campaign to censor the movies was the first sign of a reaction from the pleasant state of moral

tolerance which during the past few years gave us repeal, the showing of prize-fight films in their entirety, a veritable swarm of fan dancers who could perform their professional antics on any stage in the country without causing a single gasp of outraged decency, a legal entry for James Joyce's "Ulysses" so that it can now be bought openly and at a reasonable price. I do not mean to say certainly that we of the lunatic fringe wanted for ourselves the privilege of going to a prize fight film or seeing a fan dance, God forbid, or even perhaps reading "Ulysses", but we do like the moral atmosphere that allows them as wants to do such things do 'em.

And I for one am encouraged by the recent election to believe that the reaction did not set in with the Legion of Decency and the temporary mutilation of certain motion pictures. This optimistic belief is supported, incidentally, by the recent Mae West picture, which shows little damage from the new censorship, as well as by the election.

D. A new alignment of parties?

1. The confusion of party lines which was evident two years ago to some extent was repeated in the election last week. We found a Democratic President supporting Bob LaFollette, who devised a party all his own, and Hiram Johnson, who ran on all party tickets for the United States Senate. The same Democratic President refused support and in fact disowned in a second-hand fashion Upton Sinclair who was labeled a Democrat. On the other hand, the President was found supporting in at least one case, that of Guffey of Pennsylvania, a man whose personal record could have been nothing less than distasteful to a Dutchess County gentleman. But Mr. Guffey was a Democrat and the Democratic Party could well take Pennsylvania merely as an object lesson if for no other

reason. Mr. Guffey's record was such that Governor Pinchot, an ardent New Dealer, was forced by his sense of political decency to give his support to Republican David Reed, and if you recall Governor Pinchot's low opinion of Mr. Reed you have an indication of what Governor Pinchot must have thought of Mr. Guffey.

The confusion of party lines was evident again in the stand taken by certain candidates on issues which theoretically were party issues. Senator Vandenberg, the successful Republican candidate in Michigan for the Senate, was a New Dealer in a sense. Senator Cutting, who apparently has been elected New Mexico's Senator on the Republican ticket, is such a New Dealer that he is considered a dangerous radical by the regular Republicans in his state. So far as I know, no Democrat opposed the New Deal, but it is recognized that some of the Democrats elected are far from being ardent supporters of the President in his leftish moments.

2. It may be said further that the decline of party government in any real sense of the word is accentuated by the results of the election. How can there be an opposition by a party which will hold less than a third of the seats in the next Congress? So far as being an opposition party, the Republicans might as well take unto the hills and pray for future strength. The old guard has gone - Fess of Ohio, Robinson of Indiana, Reed of Pennsylvania, these three typical examples of the Great Haters of the Democrats and their New Deal have all been dropped from the rolls. Austin of Vermont will still be there hating the New Deal, but his role will be pretty much that of a pop gun in the next World war. Borah will be there disagreeing with everything, but although his label is Republican Mr. Borah has never agreed with the

regular Republicans any more than he agrees with the Democrats.

While it is obvious that the Republicans as a party will not be an effective opposition, it is equally naive to expect the Democrats to hold together as a solid front in supporting a definite program. The last session of Congress demonstrated that the Democrats are not a united front, and the next session will repeat the demonstration. An overwhelming majority tends to ruin the discipline of any party so that dissident groups will form within the party frame work on any issue of importance.

3. This state of affairs indicates that the opposition and support given policies in the next Congress will come more than ever (thought it is no new thing) from factions, from interest groups within the parties who will have an interest at stake in the proposed legislation. There will be probably a left wing group and a right wing group; there will be blocs united for specific interests fighting other blocs; there will be a veterans bloc say, fighting an industrialists bloc; an inflationary bloc fighting a sound money bloc.

4. The position of the President in this situation will continue to be what it has been for two years - that of a man who is riding several horses and trying to keep them all in line, or of a man who must keep his balance on the fence but keep everybody happy by occasionally teetering toward one side then the other, so that both sides will have some hope that he is going to fall their way. Whether he can continue to straddle and teeter for another two years or more remains to be seen. From our inadequate surface viewpoint it is difficult to see how he can avoid taking a definite stand on some major issues before long. When he takes any stand, he will be supported on one hand by a

faction within his party and fought on the other hand by another faction of his party. It will not be party government, but the end may be about the same. At least we have lived through previous sessions when the same situation prevailed and the results have not been disastrous.

5. The future alignment of parties will depend largely, it seems, on whether the Republican party will: (a) revise its program to appeal to the desires of the people next election instead of appealing to what the party leaders think should be the desires of the people, or (b) enjoy the lucky break of some catastrophic upset of the Democrats, as the depression was a catastrophic upset of the last Republicans and a very fortunate thing for the Democrats.

The first of these possibilities seems remote at the moment. The present Republican leaders are some of the most obstinate men in all Christendom. They are convinced that the New Deal is evil and immoral, a violation of all the codes of decency ever devised in the seats of the mighty and promulgated by the late-lamented Mr. Ivy Lee through the Herald Tribune or the Chicago Tribune or the Saturday Evening Post. They will probably never be able to see that many voters cannot see the horrible indecency and obvious economic insanity of this thing called the New Deal - this unwarranted and un-American beast that threatens to tell an individual that he must shorten his work week and pay higher wages. I think it very doubtful that the present Republican leadership will ever assume the garb of liberalism even to beat the Democrats. There are calls for new leadership. If it should attain power perhaps the Party will regain some of its losses in 1936.

As for the possibility of a catastrophe which will ruin the Democrats, it seems not unlikely that one may come eventually. But in

this realm we have too little information from the inner circles regarding such things as the tax program and monetary policies, control of industry and agriculture to hazard a serious guess about the future collapse of the New Deal.

6. Perhaps a third party, one apart from either the Democratic or Republican will appear? Again the odds seem to be against this possibility.

The minor parties now in existence - the Farmer-Labor, the LaFollette Progressive (which is new only in a change of name), the Socialist, and the Communist - failed to show any notable gain in strength last week. The powerful cohesive force of the patronage to be distributed by the President will greatly discourage any tendency for the Democrats to split into new parties.

Any new radical left-wing party that might try to rise would face the apparently insurmountable difficulties that have always hindered the peaceful rise of radical groups: (a) the radical group would have small financial backing, while the opposition would have millions to spend in just such a merciless counter campaign as the one which defeated Upton Sinclair. (b) The standing organization of the older parties, covering as it does the smallest precinct, could hardly be duplicated by the new group on a national scale. (c) Finally, once the new group by some heroic effort had placed its program before enough of the public to threaten the older parties with defeat, the older parties would take as their own enough of the radical program to absorb the support that had been developed for the new group.

So we enter two years of government by factions intensified, two years of watching the President try to stay on the fence, two years of seeing more clearly than before the fact that party government has never been in recent years the perfect balance that it appears to be on paper.