

Why I Vote the Democratic Ticket

"Would you tell me, please," said Alice to the Cheshire Cat, "which way I ought to walk from here?"

"That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.

"I don't much care where," said Alice, "so long as I get somewhere."

There are a good many people in this country at the present moment who feel about the coming presidential election as Alice in Wonderland felt about the direction she took - they don't much care so long as they get "somewhere."

If that is the way we feel, we can only choose between the man Herbert Hoover and the man Alfred Smith. And that is a difficult matter, for both are able and upright, both have for years given their best to public service. Elect either and we are sure to get "somewhere."

If it is between the two men, old friendships, old relations, their record on the point which we have especially at heart, is as good a guide as any. If, swayed by no such influences, then we can do no better than to decide as Alice did when the Cheshire Cat informed her that one of the two roads before which she hesitated led to the Hatter and the other to the March Hare. "I have seen a Hatter," said Alice - the March Hare will be "much the more interesting."

To choose the one of two which is for you the more interesting is always a valid reason.

But is it true that all there is to a vote next Fall is to choose one of two remarkable products of American life and institutions? It would be true if a political party was the tool of one man - as an Italian party is. But that is not yet true in the United States. A political party with us is still more than its leader. It is still the average of a freely expressed will, judgment, ambition, character of all the men and women in it. A leader may do wonders with his party - in our day Theodore Roosevelt did wonders with the Republican party, Woodrow Wilson with the Democratic, but both, in the long run, could go no further than the consent of his followers. Neither could stay nor substantially deflect that unseen and powerful under-current that sweeps men and women into a party and keeps them there until they lose their faith in the party's fidelity to the under-current.

To be sure, both Democratic and Republican politicians have done all they dared this year to persuade voters that they were both headed to an identical "somewhere." "I always view with a little degree of suspicion a law firm made up of a Democrat and a Republican" said Governor Smith of New York, talking recently of political conditions in small communities. "Usually it seems to have been formed to get 'em coming and going."

Both the Democratic and the Republican platforms this year - and it is not the first time - were obviously prepared to "get 'em coming and going." But what more can we expect? Consider how a platform comes into being. It is simply the best average a committee can strike between the factions fighting within the party, combined with as much thunder as it can steal from its antagonist, without the theft being too blatant. ~~The result, generally speaking, is no better and no worse than the average political thinking of the whole mass.~~

But a party cannot be judged merely by a platform framed in the heat of a political struggle. The thing that really matters is the trend of a party, the unseen under-current and to understand that you must take its record for at least fifty years. Look at it that way and you see clearly enough that there is a choice to be exercised next Fall.

Something over fifty years ago the Republican party decided to make common cause with one class of its citizens, the manufacturers. Against the advice of a large body of its best men, it made them a favored class, very much as the Soviet Republic has made a favored class of the factory worker. From that time on the party has steadily put more and more power into the hands of the men with whom it ^{then} went into business.

The Democratic party has contended from the start that it was impossible to work out a thorough-going democracy where you had the whole country taxed to create one highly prosperous class. It disputed the Republican contention that if the manufacturer and his labor profited everybody else would profit in proportion. It pointed out the inevitable monopolistic tendency of such a practice, the tendency to concentrate power at the top, to tie up government more and more closely with private business. Furthermore, it insisted that the logic of this policy, as well as the only justice, was to extend to every class as rapidly as possible some form of compensating privilege. All of these things have ~~come or~~ ~~are coming true~~ ^{are coming true} slowly. It has become clear to all uninterested observers that if this trend of the Republican party goes on unarrested, the result must be a corporate state, - a corporate state much more magnificent than that Mussolini and his ^{almost} colleagues are building in Italy, because it can draw on limitless natural resources and they have none, but also far less honest for it will be camouflaged as a democracy, and camouflage is something for which the Italian Dictator has supreme contempt. He does not pretend to be anything but an armed autocrat, trying to establish a stable government of a new kind, and one which, if he lives to work it out, will have a much larger degree

of genuine co-operation between all productive groups than any ^{present} corporate state worked out under Republican principles ~~in this~~ ~~country~~ can possibly have.

For a number of years now, we have had under our eyes a clear, beautiful and highly important exhibit of the kind of centralizing of power in private hands that naturally develops in a country as largely governed as we are by a privileged class. It is that grandiose attempt to put under private control all the power and light that will ever be yielded by all the water power of this country, to make it into a "Giant Power" secure under the able rule of the highly intelligent, highly efficient and often highly humane men who are building up the service. These men, generally speaking, believe that it is better for the business of the country that they should control this water power so perfectly that no outside ownership can disturb their country-wide service. They believe that with a government to their liking they can work so smoothly that no regulation unfavorable to them will ever disturb their plans, their prices, their efficient management. They have done wonders in the last eight years of Republican government in effecting combinations, for today eighty per cent of the power production of this country is under the control of fifteen companies - fifty per cent is controlled by five companies.

The purpose to make it all one thing has not been undeclared. Seven years ago, one of the most able of these gentlemen, Mr. Samuel Insul of Chicago said frankly that one power system for the entire country was ahead of us. It was along about this time that those who believed that this was a desirable end set about to educate us to believe with them that public management of a utility is an "inherent failure," also to dazzle our vision with the magnificence of of one Giant Power, - all the streams harnessed - by private interests, of course.

Their promoters have done magnificently. "There is no more romantic temperament on earth," says Joseph Conrad in "Victory", "than the temperament of a good promoter." We have never had such an efficient and complete scheme for educating the public to what a single group of private interests wish us to believe, put into force in the history of the country. It has aimed literally at reaching everybody ~~in the country~~ from the eighth grade up. The gentlemen responsible recently told the Federal Trade Commission which was investigating their activities, rather sorrowfully, that there was no use trying to do anything below the eighth grade, but everything beyond that, up to the university itself, was reachable, also everybody outside of the schools who could read; or, if they didn't read, went to the movies. They grew almost dithyrambic in telling the Commission how they carried their campaign for persuading the people of

their own incompetency when it came to handling their own business, into the colleges, women's clubs, Chautauqua assemblies, lyceum courses, libraries, newspapers. In Illinois alone, 653 high schools have been using literature especially prepared by the great utility industries. And all over the country, all the ⁱKewanis, Rotary and other men's and women's clubs have been listening to what the utilities call "dependable speakers."

Now, I would be the last to contend that the water power interests have not the right to present their case as fully as they think wise to the public, to put out all of the literature and send out all of the speakers that they will, - ~~but-they-must-be-frank-and-above-board-about-it,-say-~~ indeed, I think it very necessary they should do so, for their own safety and justification where rates must be revised and extensions undertaken; but they must be frank and above-board about it, - say frankly: "This material has been prepared at the expense and by the order of the public utilities of the country. We come here as the paid agents, in their interests, to tell you what we believe to be true and to be for the real advantage of your community." If they want to do that, they should have the chance. But there has been, as a rule, no labeling of their propaganda.

This educational campaign of the Public Utilities corporations is successful, in their view, in proportion to the degree in which it undermines the faith of the men and women in a community to do things for themselves. People are taught that they are unable to handle their own affairs, that they must look outside of the community if they are to have an efficient service of power and light. This is bad enough for grown-ups, but it is a terrible wrong to boys and girls to build up in them the feeling that a community is an impotent thing, that there is nothing of importance for them in the place to which they belong, that they must go out, get into some great centralized thing. The teaching is having its effect for youth in the United States is more and more willing to become a hired man rather than to risk the small individual undertaking.

The youth who does venture to go it alone usually receives little or no encouragement or advice from the Big, yet the Big, as a rule, have come up from the same place where the youth stands. What they have done they often have done by venturing. If they understand at all the implications in a democracy, then should not they consider one of their first duties to be that of sharing what they have learned with those who are struggling up from where they once were? Certainly, this is what we ask of the sportsman, to pass on what he knows. It seems

sometimes in our business world as if a man's rise destroyed in him all faith in the mass from which he came. Or is it, perhaps, that he fears that out of that mass there may come some strong new force, challenging the stability of what he has attained?

The Democratic party has always fought this effort of centralized power and wealth to weaken the faith of men in their capacity to do things for themselves. Governor Smith in his fight to hold onto the water power of New York State has built on his faith in people to do things for themselves. He has had a long fight - twenty-one years - a fight beginning when the Pittsburgh Aluminum Company secured a charter for harnessing the St. Lawrence river. It lost it, but never gave up its efforts to regain it, and Governor Smith has been a chief factor in preventing their success. He holds it as a principle that the people of the State should look on these waters and their development as their property and their business, that they should not allow them to be alienated even by lease for any period of time.

No one has ever used the Democratic doctrine of the direct appeal to the people more effectively than he has in his struggle to arouse the people to accept this principle. And every time he has made an appeal he has raised the faith of the public in its own importance, strengthened that very thing that the educational campaign of the Utility Corporations have been trying to destroy.

But there has been no appeal to prejudice, to hate of wealth or class or big things of any sort in his fight. As a matter of fact, there is nothing in Democratic doctrine as we are getting it today, to discourage business simply because it is big. It is not big and efficient business that Governor Smith and his party condemn, it is business founded on special interests, on private control of powers which belong to the State. What he and his party are against is class government, which is a very different thing from business government.

Governor Smith in his handling of the water power in this State has been totally free from any kind of demagogism. that thorough-going democracy is impracticable in business and govern- He knows that men may believe it as honestly as he believes that (ment the man in the street can decide between right and wrong and can do right if you will take the trouble to teach him. Therefore he is always willing to sit down with the big business man. "If a man is to be successful in an executive position," he says, "he must at least be able to discuss a matter at hand intelligently with other men who disagree with him. It is impossible for him to get anywhere if he mistakes honest disagreement for antagonism. When a group of interested citizens comes before the Chief Executive to make an honest, straightforward request, he must be prepared to sit down and discuss it. He cannot holler at them and say, 'You came up from Wall Street.'"

Moreover, if a class, however protected by privilege, has developed valuable methods, improved service, contributed anything to the well being of life, as nearly all our great corporations have, Governor Smith and the Democratic party believe its discoveries should be used. If privilege has a part in development it is all the more important that what they have done should be made available to all. That is, the platform of the Democratic party and its present leader do not include in their program the destruction of anything that can be proved sound and beneficial. They are not advocating or practicing revolutionary methods. It is an evolutionary party, bent on preserving whatever of good has been developed in the country and putting it within the reach of all.

Governor Smith, for instance, doesn't rail against a "Giant Power" interlacing the nation. What he does contend, however, is that the source of that power should remain with the nation to which it belongs. "If we are going to hook up with any giant power scheme," he said not long ago to a group of New Yorkers, "let us be sure before we make the hook-up that we own the source of supply. If you don't, you might as well give it away to private enterprises for the rest of the life of the State, for the minute these waters go over the State line, we lose all control of them."

It is natural - inevitable, indeed, that a party founded on a privileged class like our manufacturers, should

sympathize with the ambition of private interests to control or own outright the water of the country. The activities of the two dovetail closely, they are necessary to one another. They both believe firmly in the ineffectiveness of government ownership and operation, believe in the centralizing of all power in a few at the top, - naturally, public ownership of anything is hateful to them. Whenever a town does run, as we know sometimes happens, its own water works or electric light plant successfully, they take it out in declaring that the community is no better than Bolshevik. Apparently, if they do succeed they ought not to! And Governor Smith, most conservative of liberal Democrats, they dub a Socialist because he would have a State take care of its own.

This dislike of a State's owning anything has had something to do with the attitude of many Republicans toward what we call the Oil Scandal. One can hardly expect a party which believes that prosperity is caused by a tax laid on the whole for the direct benefit of a comparative few, or those who believe public ownership and operation are "inherent failures," to feel any genuine outrage at the turning over of leases of government lands for whatever purpose they might have been held, to private operation as the naval leases were turned over in the case of Teapot Dome and Elks Hill.

This is not saying that their sympathy necessarily extends to the rough work by which these contracts were obtained. Hatred of corruption is a doctrine of all parties. It is unjust to attempt to fix it as a special attribute of any group of men. A great corporation may be built up with the aid of injustice and unlawful practices - we have such; but that is not saying that all great corporations are dishonest and unjust. Many of them are scrupulously fair. But in every great aggregation of men, and particularly political parties, there are evil and greedy men; and when they succeed in carrying out some sinister and lawless scheme, the temptation of the leaders is to ignore it "for the good of the party", and at the same time to distract attention from their own black spot by hunting for black spots on their rival's body. No one can doubt that the loathsome scandal which for the past six years has been dragging across the whole country, taking its even into the White House, was utterly hateful to the great mass of the Republican party, and certainly to the majority of the members of the two administrations which it affected. But Republican solidarity could not be disturbed. One almost prayed to hear a clenched fist banging the cabinet table in Washington, a loud voice denouncing the outrage and calling for the fullest light and punishment, ^{to see} ~~somebody~~ ^{hurtling} a port-folio through a window, one honest outburst of righteous indignation; we almost prayed for it, but we didn't hear a peep.

There is the trouble of centralization, of solidarity.

Those affected must eat their own vomit. And that is what the party tied up with wealth has been doing steadily ever since this country was founded. Federalist congressmen and their friends back in 1790 bought the certificates which a poverty-stricken government had given Revolutionary soldiers and sailors in payment for their services - bought them for fifteen or twenty cents on the dollar, when they found that Congress was about to vote a tax on the whole country to pay the soldiers and sailors one hundred cents on the dollar. And when popular indignation broke out, they only jeered. It was left for the Democrats to remonstrate, but all they got for their pains was the contemptuous title of demagogues. Centralized wealth breeds arrogance and a protection of its own in operations which the great majority of the leaders and members of the party may heartily detest.

This is not saying that the Democratic party, aiming at de-centralizing wealth, is Simon pure - by no means. It has its rascals, but it is practically impossible that its corruption should be national as in the Oil Scandal, however bad it may be at times locally.

An old contention of the Democrats - that the Republicans were deceiving themselves when they insist that their tariff-made prosperity could be equally distributed, has come to the top in the present campaign. It never has been equally distributed, and it never can be. Moreover, it was inevitable that sooner

or later those outside the favored circle should discover that they were not getting the full share they were promised and should cry for a compensating subsidy. Why should not the farmer call for an equalizing tax? He has supported the protective system faithfully for years because he was told that it would give him a larger^{home}/market, with higher prices. It has. But it gave him a market subject to serious fluctuations. Also it gave him dear and irregular labor, expensive transportation, a highly complex market system, over-laden with middle men, vicious gambling in his products, and perhaps worst of all, educated him to the undemocratic idea that it is always possible to find panaceas for economic troubles.

Moreover, he has been feeling the pressure towards combination. Temperamentally our farmer is our greatest individualist. He detests being a hired man, and when he sees land gathered into huge blocks, the same highly efficient methods applied to its tilling, the thinking all done at the top, nothing to do but to conform and keep your mouth shut, he doesn't like the prospect and calls for his subsidy. He certainly did it whole-heartedly in the Farm Relief bill. That bill was the cap of the system, and a perfectly logical cap, if we are going to give symmetry to our pyramid of privilege.

The remarkable and almost vitriolic message of the President of the United States, who himself honestly believes protection to be the cause of prosperity, was one of the best possible arraignments of a privilege tax placed on a people for the sake of a class, that we have ever had; and practically every point of it applied as perfectly to the protective tariff as it did to the Farm Relief bill.

The farmer needs help. But he needs something more fundamental than the panacea for which he has called. He needs the loosening of the log jam in which he has been caught by the attempt to build up privileged and centralized wealth. He needs education in and opportunity to use the great modern machinery of financing, scientific management, all the vast new knowledge on the matters in which he is concerned. He needs to believe in co-operation with his fellows - a co-operation where his own initiative will have place, not a consolidation with a top which acts for him. Then he can work out his own problems and keep his self-respect as an independent individual.

To a thorough-going Democrat this keeping men independent is much more important than making them rich. He is less interested in getting things done than in getting more and more people to do things. In his judgment that is the way in which democracy lies. And here he is in direct conflict with the Republican theory of the strong top. The Democrat doesn't believe that you get your best results in the long run from the

top. Moreover, he believes that you will only get big things done, in the long run, as the bottom consents. The failure of the Eighteenth Amendment under its present interpretative clause is a painful example of an attempt to centralize the control of an appetite in the Federal Government. Here is a country, 1598 miles from north to south, and 2807 miles in extent from east to west, the tidal shore line of its mainland 7314 miles long and broken and bent into innumerable bays, gulfs, lagoons, threaded with rivers and spotted with vast forests and deserts, open to every sort of land, water and air craft, peopled with nearly 110,000,000 men and women of all sorts of traditions, customs and views - a people jealous of its local authority. The the Federal Government attempts to tell this people what they cannot drink, and a substantial and ever increasing number of them thumb their noses at the Government.

Enforcement will succeed only in proportion to the consent of the local community. An educational scheme like that of the Utility Corporations mentioned above, would, in the long run, work much better and at much less cost than the Federal agents not backed by local tradition can ever do. The interpretation of democracy is clear in this attempt to centralize the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment in the Federal Government. It is for de-centralizing the whole attempt. Temperance, yes - God help us to it; but let us not deceive ourselves into thinking we can get

it merely by passing an Amendment and paying policemen. It is a deeper thing, as world peace is a deeper thing than courts and leagues and treaties. It lies ultimately with men's wills. We will never get a temperate country until we have the will to temperance, and that is something that only education can produce.

What we get of good and evil in a democracy comes from the bottom. It is the brooding mass, growing unconsciously through the years that throws up pregnant ideas and the leader fitted to handle them. Neither ever come from a centralized, stabilized, standardized top. Such a top is hostile to them, for it has itself to preserve. It has to be forced to adapt itself to the new thing. The mass is eager to accept, for it is not stable, it is ever pushing up to improve itself. It is always there that we find the great inspiring new trends.

Now, this faith in the mass finds its chief strength today in the Democratic party. On the contrary, the Republican party pins its faith to prosperity! It tells you it has found the cause of it, and give it time and it will find a way for its equal distribution.

But it is not distribution of wealth or money chiefly that the Democrat wants. What he is after is a distribution of the chances to exercise initiative, to share in skill and knowledge. He wants more people taking part in the doing and the learning and the controlling - more talent coming to the top.

He believes there are potential Herbert Hoovers and Alfred Smiths in every community in the land, he wants them to see a chance at ^{high} home for/service, building the foundations stronger and stronger.

Perhaps the country would grow less rapidly in dollars under Democratic than Republican ideas, but we would get in the end a greater division of whatever is worth while in our development, we would have, too, a more stable state, because more people will be working on their own in it, giving a broader foundation. It would be a State less subject to revolutionary attack because its aim will be to arouse self-directed effort in individuals. Such a State will be a far better guarantee for world peace than a state built on privilege, whose aim is to shut the nation's door as far as possible to outside products, an aim which is an invitation to the ill-will of every country on the globe.

No, it is the trend not the candidate^{alone}/by which men must decide how to cast their votes this coming Fall. The trend of one party is toward the top, the trend of the other party is toward the mass at the bottom. It all comes down to how much faith we have in the mass. For myself, I believe with Governor Smith that democracy is so eternally right that Almighty God will keep us on our feet.