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Observations on the Political Campaign, 1948.

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE POLITICAL CAMPAIGN

By

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Sunday Morning
October 31, 1948

Within two days, Friends, the citizens of the United States will go to their polls to elect the Chief Executive and many other candidates for posts in this, the most powerful nation of the world. For nearly 160 years American citizens have gone freely to the polls to do just that, and have maintained their free government. The world has witnessed in this time, during this long period of more than a century and a half, many revolutions, many governments have been overthrown, many democracies have collapsed. But the American citizens weathered all storms, including the dangerous Civil War. The American citizen is still master of his government, and not the other way round. He can still go to the polls and vote out of office any public official he does not like and vote into office others more acceptable to him. The free and secret ballot is the American citizen's scepter of authority, and it symbolizes to him and to his officials and to the country at large that government exists for the sake of the governed and not the other way round; that governments are instituted as it is stated in our Declaration of Independence, "that governments are instituted among men to make secure the unalienable rights of men in justice and in equality; and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

During this last generation especially, this fundamental doctrine has been challenged and has been rejected in many parts of the earth by totalitarian governments, both of the right and of the left, and wars have been waged - the deadliest in all history - to destroy this fundamental principle upon which our government is based and which is reaffirmed on every election day. In place of our fundamental principle of a free and sovereign people, dictatorships have sought to establish the absolute authority of the state - the dictatorship of one class or another - and the subjugation of the individual to

the absolute authority of government, a government which he cannot control. Other democracies have succumbed to this onslaught in recent years. The American democracy has not. There are not many places left in the world today where citizens can freely nominate their own candidates and can demand of these candidates that they should come before them to solicit and endorse, on the basis of record or forum, that they should subject themselves on the basis of ruthless criticism of opposing political parties and candidates, and that people be informed through press and radio the position of the candidates on issues and that these candidates shall await the decision of a free electorate. And there are not many places in the world today where the ballot - the will of the majority - finally decides and decides finally. The losing candidate by custom congratulates the winning candidate and wishes him well. One set of men depart from public office; another set take their place, but the democratic machinery of government continues to function with no upheavals, no disturbances, no outlawing of the opposition party, no liquidations, no undergrounds. The minority is permitted to function in government as a minority, is free to continue to express its views and free to build up its strength for the next election.

Now there is a grandeur and nobility in this system which are sometimes missed by those who see only the routine mechanics of a campaign, a routine which is not always inspiring. The showmanship which is incidental to political campaign, the parades, the political harangues and the synthetic enthusiasm which is engendered, the bluster and the verbal uproar - these should not obscure the glorious and radiant reality which is involved in campaigning - the reality of a free people periodically taking stock and overhauling its government to assure that it corresponds most accurately to its wishes and needs.

These surface and sometimes unattractive machinations of a political routine incidental to a campaign should not cause us to overlook that it is through this method that a free people serve notice on all officials that if the people remains the master, regardless of how exalted and responsible is the position to which the people may have elevated this or that man.

Now there may be a difference of opinion as to the quality and effectiveness of campaign speeches, speeches for example such as we have listened to in recent weeks - the campaign speeches of the principal candidates, Mr. Truman and Mr. Dewey, when they were before the people to solicit their votes. Some, for example, felt that Mr. Truman as President of the United States, might well have been a little more restrained in his utterances. Personally I like a little spice and paprika in my politics, and if President Truman, as he put it, wants to "give them hell", I have no objections. Some have felt that Mr. Dewey might have been a little less evangelical and platitudinous in his campaign speeches, and might have discussed a little more realistically the specific problems and issues of these times and treated his listeners as mature human beings. I personally believe that his effectiveness would have been enhanced by a more mature type of discussion. Some have felt that Mr. Wallace presented his case a little too hysterically, but the over-riding fact - the never-to-be-overlooked fact, is that these candidates have had to carry their case to the American people, to the turbulence of American public opinion, and have their program evaluated and judged by the people, and they have to abide by the judgment of this people.

This campaign, however, has also accented what I regard as the bar sinister in our democratic discussions of the shield of American democratic life. The emergence of the so-called States Rights party in the South. We have not paid much attention to it in the North, but this is an important political factor in the South. Its candidate, Governor J. Strom Thurmond, may actually carry

several of the Southern states and it is an important manifestation of something which is tragically wrong in our American democracy. This party, the States Rights party, is, as you will recall, the rebel wing of the Democratic Party which broke away and set up house for itself when the Democratic Convention adopted a rather mild civil rights platform aimed at obtaining equality for the American Negro. This civil rights program calls for a federal antipoll tax law, an anti-lynching law - it would prohibit segregation - it aims for a federal fair employment practice act to make it unlawful to discriminate. This civil rights program which mirrors our Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights, is under the attack of this States Rights Party. Under the slogan of States Rights during the Civil War - non-intervention by the federal government, this substantial wing of the Democratic Party has broken away from the party in its resolve to defeat this basically democratic and American principle. I do not know how sincere Mr. Truman was when he projected this program. When he talked in Texas, he refrained from discussing his civil rights program there. The important thing is that the violent opposition to this program in the South - strong enough to impel them to disrupt their own party and to assure its defeat, evidence of a tragic discrepancy in at least one important sector of our nation between our democratic practice and our democratic preaching.

We may choose to ignore this when we speak enthusiastically of our American way of life in the councils of the world, but the nations abroad do not ignore it and cannot ignore it, and nothing so undermines our moral status in the world and nothing so questions our sincerity about human rights and human freedom as this fact, and in our own midst a vast group is attempting to destroy these same basic human rights and freedoms, all of which should make us

aware that we have a long way to go yet to realize the dream which is America, and furthermore, it should give us a measure of humility in all our dealings with other people and governments whose want of freedom we deplore.

Now this has not been a tense or exciting campaign. Our nation is prosperous and our people are at work. 61,000,000 of our fellow citizens are gainfully employed, and profits and wages and farm income are the highest in our history. Our national income for the past year exceeded \$200,000,000,000. At such times political campaigns do not take on the character of urgency, especially when there are no colorful personalities in the political ring, and there are none today. President Truman has, in the last few weeks, attempted to present himself to the American electorate as a knight in shining armor, but I am afraid he has not been altogether convincing. He is not of the warrior type, and what he has uttered at times sounded very radical, but somehow one does not associate what he says with the man. Coming from one who was just President Roosevelt's running mate because of his conservative dependability, this new-found radical does not sound quite authentic. His championship of American labor, for example, which he regards as his crusade and his attacks on the Taft-Hartley law, which he vetoed, are undoubtedly sincere. The Taft-Hartley law has many serious flaws which should be removed - perhaps the whole law should be repealed - but Mr. Truman's championship of American labor appears less convincing and somewhat unrelated to any consistent policy against the background of his lamentable appearance before Congress that the striking railroad workers should be drafted into the army, in order to avert their threatened strike.

There are no crusades in this campaign and there are no crusaders. On most domestic issues Democrats and Republicans have seldom been far apart in the Congress of the United States, whether in the 79th or 80th. Take the Taft-Hartley law which President Truman vetoes. Congress overrode his veto, but the over-

riding of the veto was made possible because 106 Democrats out of 188 joined 225 Republicans to veto it in the House of Representatives, and 20 Democrats joined 48 Republicans in the Senate to veto it. The veto would never have been overridden but for the fact that Democrats united with Republicans. The President did not have the backing of his own party in this piece of legislation.

Take the Displaced Persons law which the President has denounced - and rightly so - as a piece of prejudiced intolerant legislation. It was made possible by the fact that 24 Democrats joined 39 Republicans in the Senate, and 108 Democrats joined 177 Republicans in the House to pass that bill.

It should be said of President Truman that he has been more progressive than his own party in most of the measures involving social legislation which came before Congress. As far as Governor Dewey is concerned, he is anything but a crusader. He is for unity nationally and for peace internationally. There are certainly no controversial matters on which all Americans are agreed. Mr. Dewey has called for more energy and efficiency and courtesy in government which he will probably bring to it if he is elected, judging by his administrative record as Governor of the state of New York. As Governor, Dewey sponsored some very laudable social measures in the state, including a fair employment practices act. Mr. Dewey appears to be what you might call a cautious liberal quite independent and resolute. He is yet to be tested in the fires of grave national problems and in the severe tensions and complications of world problems.

Mr. Wallace loomed large at the outset as a crusader, the heir of Wilkie, the champion of one world at a time when our world was being hopelessly divided and was drifting into a third world war, but Mr. Wallace unfortunately isolated himself within a group whose adherents are largely, tho' not exclusively, interested in the Soviet world, and this has forced him to become the apologist

for the Soviet Union, a government which is responsible certainly as much as any nation for the dangerous situation in which the world finds itself today. There has been little in his utterances which sounded like a defense of the great democratic ideals which have been threatened in the world today. The real key to the present impasse between East and West is the realization that both sides are responsible and culpable and that a new start must be made in repentance and goodwill to save our world. Mr. Wallace had the opportunity to become the impartial and trusted spokesman of the reconciliation of the East and West, something which Franklin Delano Roosevelt hoped for, but he has become the mouthpiece of a pro-Soviet minority, and he has directed his main appeal ~~not~~ not to the whole of the American people, but to the unqualified grievances of the minority groups.

Mr. Wallace is a man of high idealism and possesses many gifts of heart and mind. One cannot escape the conclusion that his mission would have been better served if he had remained within his party unless his chief purpose was to hurt the President who had grievously wronged him by forcing his resignation from the Cabinet for a speech on the Soviet Union which the President had read and approved before it was delivered.

Mr. Norman Thomas is running again, apparently for the sake of the record and to keep the Socialist Party in the campaign. Four years ago he received 80,000 votes out of a total of 48,000,000. How many he will receive this year it is not easy to say - perhaps a slightly larger vote. Nevertheless the size of the vote ought not to mislead us. Mr. Thomas's party's program is very similar to that of the British Labor Party which took over the government of that staid and conservative country called Great Britain, and undoubtedly our world is moving in that direction - of planned democratic economy and socialized industry, and our own country is undoubtedly moving in that direction more slowly than other countries. But America's trend toward socialization will probably

not be carried forward by Thomas's party, but through the normal evolution under stress of economic circumstances of one of the major political parties. After Tuesday, friends, the two real problems confronting the American people on which the leading candidates have relatively very little to say will remain the two leading problems confronting the American people. One is inflation and the other is our relation to the Soviet Union.

We are drifting dangerously to economic disaster. Every sane person understands it. Many of us remember the consequences of inflation in the early thirties. Mr. Dewey would meet the situation of inflation by eliminating all unnecessary governmental expenditures and reducing the national debt by revision of federal taxes. I am not an economist and I do not know how successful these measures would prove, but simultaneously with his call for reduction of governmental spending, Mr. Dewey advocates an increase of federal expenditure by favoring a program of universal military training, increased aid to Europe, a large housing program, increasing social security benefits, maintaining farm support and many other plans for large-scale developments. Most of these recommendations are very laudable but involving as they do huge expenditures, how Mr. Dewey reconciles them with the hope of reducing expenditures, is something we need more light on.

Mr. Truman would solve inflation by restoring price control which he himself terminated in 1946. If the Republicans are elected, the first things they should bring forcibly to their minds on Wednesday is the year 1929, the last memories of the Republican administration with its 16,000,000 unemployed and its soup kitchens, closed banks and the misery of the American people. The problem that cannot be met with verbal promises.

And the second urgent and pressing problem which they have to face is the problem of finding a "modus vivendi" with Russia. On Russia both parties say

they have a bi-partisan policy, but this bi-partisan policy has led, up to this point, to a stone wall. Mr. Truman began his policy of encirclement of the Soviet Union by taking over responsibility in Greece and Turkey, and since then the tension between the two countries has mounted almost daily until now we are confronted with the necessity of arming half the world against the other half. This, of course, involves building up Germany again as Hitler saw it, as the chief bulwark against a sound economy, and it involves drawing in all the Fascist governments in Europe, especially Franco, and our Secretary of State has sent out feelers regarding all governments to withdraw their ministers from Franco Spain. This bi-partisan policy on Russia has forced the draft and may lead to military training in the near future.

Everywhere one hears the talk of war and the whole program of arming half the world against the other might lead to bankruptcy.

Dewey has not criticized this program. He has only said the President is vacillating in this program. The program seems to be basically the same. Both parties uphold the United Nations, but neither has indicated how the United Nations can best serve and no one has called upon the implementation of the United Nations to meet this situation and for which the U.N. was established. The U.N. has been rendered as helpless as the League of Nations after the first World War.

Mr. Truman's utterances have been better than his actions. He has been severely criticized because he has attempted to get directly in touch with ^{the} one man who decides policy for the Soviet Union. Most recently Mr. Truman attempted to establish this direct approach through Justice Vinson. The timing may have been unfortunate. Undoubtedly there was a considerable amount of ineptitude, but the idea is a sound one - a very sound one - and no opportunity should be lost to make a new start, to make every conceivable start to meet this situation which is drifting from bad to worse.

Perhaps there are too many generals who have been guiding or controlling Mr. Truman - generals in Moscow, Berlin and Washington. Generals ought to stay out of jobs intended for civilians. Their point of view, approach, training are directed to the task of solving an issue by force, and the best kind of general should be ^{used in} such situations. But diplomacy is intended to arrive at a solution without force and it requires a different wisdom and a different skill and a different attitude.

These two basic problems, in my judgment, will confront both parties, whichever is elected on Tuesday, and they will have to get to work on them under pressure of urgency. We pray that whoever is elected will receive the guidance and the strength which the awesome office calls for, and that a kind providence will guide the new officials whom the free American people will elect to office because so much of the fate of the world - not to speak of the fate of ourselves and of our children - will depend in the days to come upon the wisdom and the courage, the ideals and the loyalty with which these men will proceed to carry out the wishes of the American people, a people whose wishes above all else are economic security and world peace.