

THE 'NEW DEAL' IN AMERICA

THE election results of November 8th, 1932, in the United States should have been expected. For as long as the human race has had popular elections the voters have been in the habit of putting out of power those holding office in a time of economic depression, and giving the others a mandate to try their skill in the handling of the weighty problems of government. In the United States, for instance, the election of 1840 reversed that of 1836 through panic. The panic of 1857 affected the election of 1860, as did also that of 1873 affect the popular vote of 1876. In 1893 Cleveland had to meet the same situation. Taft in 1908 is the sole exception proving the rule, and that was because he was the candidate of the still popular 'Teddy' Roosevelt, and a discontented Democracy did not rally to Bryan. Now a tidal wave of votes sweeps Mr. Herbert Hoover and the Republicans out of Federal and State offices, and sweeps Mr. Franklin Roosevelt and the Democrats into power. It is the first time since before the Civil War that the Democrats have been in the majority in the nation, Vermont being the only State under undisputed Republican sway. Thirty-eight out of forty-eight States have Democratic Governors, and the State legislatures will be predominantly Democratic. Three-quarters of the House of Representatives will be Democratic and in the Senate there will be a Democratic majority of twenty-two. Out of five hundred and thirty-one votes, the electoral college cast four hundred and seventy-two for Roosevelt, and the people a majority of between six and seven millions. The bare cupboard of depression has vitalized the Democratic Party.

One writer has called this action of the voters a revolution. Certainly it is not a red revolution. Radicalism was killed much more completely than Republicanism. The Socialist candidate got not more than one million out of forty million votes, or about two and a half per cent., as compared with the six per cent. of Debs in 1912. The Communist candidate, the Liberal Party standard bearer, and Prohibition's defender, polled only between twenty-

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one thousand and thirty-five thousand votes each, whereas the Socialist-Labor Party got only five thousand odd votes. The election seemed to prove conclusively that the United States is 'the most conservative nation in the world.' As one editor has remarked, the election 'was unmistakably a good old-fashioned American political bonfire—plenty of red fire but no red revolution.'

The Revolution will probably be a coldly rational one. The seventy-five year control of the Northern and Eastern States by the Republicans through rotten boroughs will probably be done away with through reapportionment. Remedies have already been applied in Illinois and Michigan, and are on the way in Ohio and New York. This Congress, also, will probably be the last of the 'lame duck' sessions. The 'lame ducks' are members of Congress continuing after their successors have been elected. As a consequence there have been four months of general uncertainty, and even business stagnation, between the election and the inauguration. One editor said: 'The damage which a lame duck Congress can do is great. It is absurd to let legislation be effected by those who no longer represent the feelings of a district.' The Norris Amendment will do away with this. It was adopted by Congress last March and has already been ratified by seventeen of the necessary thirty-six States. The nineteen more needed will undoubtedly be forthcoming when twenty-nine other State legislatures meet in January. This Twentieth Amendment advances the Presidential inauguration from March 4th to January 20th, and Congressional terms from March 4th to January 3rd. The combination of its effects with a reapportionment of representative districts will obviously have a radical effect on party control and partisan legislation.

At this writing the closing session of the Seventy-second Congress is almost over. On its very first day the House of Representatives gave an example of the stupidity of a 'lame duck' session, and also an indication of the 'wet' power which will function after March 4th. Prohibition

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repeal was voted on, and rejected by only six votes. The Republicans were about equally divided on the question. But the Democrats, except for some disgruntled 'lame ducks' who refused to answer to the cry of the Speaker's call, were overwhelmingly for repeal, in accordance with their platform. There can be little, if any, doubt, however, as to what will be the fate of this issue in the Seventy-third Congress. Both Republicans and Democrats are pledged to eventual repeal on a real wave—though not of water! They promised immediate repeal, with, meanwhile, a modification of the Volstead Act permitting beer, and perhaps light wines. That promise they seem determined to fulfil. It seems surer because a wet Congress is made wetter by reason of the prohibition referendum in at least ten states. There are details to be worked out yet as to saloon prevention and liquor taxes. But, if in no other way, the eventual repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment will prove that the 1932 election was truly a tidal wave.

It must not be forgotten, however, that there are normally five million more Republicans than Democrats. Yet, as an experienced political observer has recently noted, millions of those Republicans who voted for Hoover in 1928 also voted for Roosevelt in 1932 without being 'liberal' or changing their outlook. This is a fact that the President-elect, in an article just off the press, seems not to realise. He still believes the liberals and progressives of all parties have rallied to him. The investigation of the United Press, though, reveals that there is an amazingly large fluctuating and independent vote that puzzles party machines, and will be difficult for them to handle. This seems more logical, especially since it seems quite evident that the election was based on the hope for the 'new deal' Mr. Roosevelt keyed them to in his nomination speech. It isn't that Mr. Roosevelt or the Democratic platform have offered any real relief or any far-reaching changes. But the voters evidently felt it was worth while taking a chance on a 'new deal,' to see if the Democrats could effectively solve such pressing problems as economic depression, pro-

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hibition, tariff, war debts, disarmament, the consolidation of railroads, reduction of taxes, and the farmers' plight. The election was clearly a mandate to settle these problems in such a way that the rights of all concerned would be respected, and the principles of American government conserved. Quickened faith in the essential right-mindedness of the electorate when it has the facts before it is the *nation's* reaction to the election. It adds: 'As for Franklin Roosevelt, if he fails to recognize and admit the fact that this election went against Mr. Hoover and not for himself, he will have made his initial—and very serious—mistake.'

The ideal of the 'new deal,' as apparently in the mind of the average American, was expressed by Wilson the Democrat in 1912: 'Don't you know that this country from one end to the other believes that something is wrong?' That there are 'some radical changes we must make in our law and practice'; that 'we stand in the presence of revolution . . . whereby America will insist upon recovering in practice those ideals which she always professed, upon securing a government devoted to the general interest and not to special interests.' Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, a leading Republican, a few days after the recent election said the same thing in principle, in advocating the liberalization of his party, showing that the huge vote was really the vote of a conservative people—people who wish to conserve their common welfare, for which government exists. Dr. Butler said in part: 'The full meaning of the elections which took place on Tuesday last should not be lost. There was an overwhelming anti-vote and only in relatively small degree a pro-vote. While this huge anti-vote was undoubtedly increased by the depression, it was by no means due to the depression alone. It is quite idle to interpret the results by use of any of the ordinary and time-honoured formulas.

'The simple fact is that since the summer of 1919 the Republican party, as represented by the vast majority of its office-holders at Washington, has been moving steadily

towards intellectual, moral and political bankruptcy. It has managed to get on the wrong side of every important question which confronts the anxious American people. As a result, the voting public, including many hundreds of thousands of intelligent and disinterested men and women who have always been Republican, but who put country before party, have thrown the Republican party organization into receivership. The subsequent proceedings will be of grave consequence.

'The rank and file of the Republican party throughout the nation is sound, intelligent, patriotic and open to conviction when offered genuine and honest argument and an interpretation of underlying political principles in their application to present-day conditions. They crave constructive and courageous leadership. The history of the movement for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment certainly proves that fact.

'The hope of the Republican party of to-morrow lies in its youth. If the young men and women who bear the party name and who have become so impatient of the intellectual, moral, and political incompetence of so many of the office-holding and office-seeking class who have dominated the party organization, particularly since 1920, will exert themselves to seek and to produce constructive, forward-facing and liberal leadership, the party, despite its overwhelming defeat, may be quickly reorganised and given new strength and new spirit for another generation of public service.

'If something of this sort cannot be done, then the Republican party will have gone the way of the Whig party and will soon pass out of existence because of its incapacity to face the future with understanding and with courage. Should that come to pass, then a new and truly Liberal party will quickly be born, composed of the very best elements of the Republican and Democratic parties, many members of which are now and for some years past have been in substantial accord upon underlying principles and ruling policies, although separated into two competing

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groups by party names and party traditions.' This is the people's idea of the 'new deal,' and the explanation of the election.

So, as Lady Astor said, 'Don't fear for the future. Now that the Democrats have won, there's a gay future'! She also said of the election: 'Its overwhelming proportions indicate that it is not a Democratic victory but a national victory. You have a national government now just as we have in England. The Democrats will make a great mistake unless they recognize this and govern from a national, or better, an international standpoint.' If so, the election of 1932 may well prove to have been a real revolution, and the 'new deal' a climax in the progress of the world.

Perhaps this hope which prompted the American voters is also the basis of the general European acclaim of the election results. It is to be feared, however, that the European hope is in a liberalism not based on the Democratic party platform so much as on the various countries' own interests. They must not forget that if prohibition goes, there will be protection against imported liquors. Mr. Roosevelt has given no indication that he will or can do better than Mr. Hoover in the matter of war debts. The Democratic tariff policy claims to be different, but in working principle will prove the same as the Republican. The *New York Herald-Tribune* remarks: 'in substance the whole reaction abroad is traceable to little more than the vague hope which moved millions of American voters that a change in this country's administration may possibly lead in some unforeseen way to a handout for all. Where it amounts to more than this it expresses the unfaltering hope that a 'liberal' Democratic régime may be more careless than a Republican one in its defense of American rights and interests. Europe cannot expect Americans of any party to have much sympathy with such aspiration.'

At the same time, Mr. Roosevelt in *Liberty* for December 10th, 1932, in an article entitled 'The Election—An Interpretation' lays down a sane and hopeful principle of foreign policy. He writes: 'Our relations with foreign

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nations transcend the mere give-and-take of traditional diplomatic intercourse. Many of our great economic problems have become of necessity question of international concern. One of these I have already mentioned, the tariff. There are many others, among which must be included the consideration of the great international question of money. All these pertain to the spirit and method of our foreign relations. We cannot wage a tariff war, for example, and expect a friendly spirit on the part of our neighbors of the world. Not only through a fair and frank international approach to economic questions, but through a generally friendly attitude manifested in all of our dealings with foreign countries, can we improve the present status of world relations. The facts, and not the terms that people apply to the facts, count in foreign relations, and it is in harmony with these facts I expect to build my foreign policy.'

In the same article, the President-elect says: 'My administration shall be devoted to the task of giving practical force and the necessary legislative form to the great central fact of American life, viz., the interdependence of all factions, sections, and interests of this great country.' He summarizes and makes a final plea for the 'new deal': 'I appeal to my fellow countrymen, and especially to the millions of liberals, progressives, and men and women of independent judgement, to cooperate with me in a patriotic endeavor to promote the welfare of the American people and the welfare of the world of which the United States is an important part. We are a generation overdue in political and economic reconstruction; we confront great difficulties—many of them the result of our own past mistakes. We are about to enter upon a new period of liberalism and of sane reform in the United States, and we shall require unity of purpose, if not of opinion, if we are to achieve permanent and practical results.'

It remains to be seen if the change entailed by the election will realize all this, if the people are to have a 'new deal' or just a change of hands in a very old deal. A

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thoughtful man has observed that the election was against a condition, not a candidate. To his mind it was an emotional release on the part of the electorate. He rightfully claims we cannot afford the luxury of such a release in a crisis, since individually and communally we always suffer from such an expression of feeling. But it is the earnest hope of all that the intelligent interest and co-operation of the people will beget government for the common good. All seem united in this aspiration. As President Hoover said in his telegram of congratulation to his successor: 'I congratulate you on the opportunity that has come to you to be of service to the country and I wish you a most successful administration. In the common purpose of all of us, I shall dedicate myself to every possible helpful effort.' This expresses the will of the people. They are looking for a leader out of the present mess Mr. Roosevelt realises that as President he will have to be that leader. He himself has said that the Presidency 'is preeminently a place of moral leadership . . . a superb opportunity for reapplying in new conditions the simple rules of human conduct to which we always go back. Without leadership, alert and sensitive to change, we are bogged up or lose our way.' May the 'new deal' in America prove to be not only a way out for the United States but for the world at large!

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