

THE STAKES OF '32

BY ARTHUR KROCK

A HEADLINE writer on the *Washington Post* was immediately responsible for the statement issued by the seven Democratic leaders on November 6 last, pledging the party to put no merely partisan obstruction in the way of measures to stimulate business, relieve public misery, and restore prosperity. For three days control of the House of Representatives and the Senate had been balancing between the two major parties. One hour the Democrats were ahead; the next the Republican factions, as combined on paper, regained the numerical lead. On the night of November 5 the *Washington Post* man whose job it was to caption the election story gave up trying to anticipate the results of recounts at that moment going on in Indiana, Minnesota and other States. He wrote this headline:

THE HOUSE DEADLOCKED CHAOS IS FORECAST

REPUBLICANS TO BE HELPLESS, EVEN SHOULD
THEY ATTAIN NOMINAL CONTROL;
MUST TRADE WITH FOES

The next morning Jouett Shouse, chairman of the executive committee of the Democratic National Committee, arose early. He was feeling extremely well. The party had made great gains in the elections. To his management of affairs at the Washington headquarters of the committee was due the effective presentation of the Democratic case during the two years following the party disaster of 1928. To him also was due the wise dispatch of

money to districts and States where it would do the most good. Perhaps for a moment, as he went through his morning exercises, Mr. Shouse joined the Why-Not-Me? Club. Presidents have been made out of material less durable and less attractive. At any rate he was exuding affability as he picked up the *Washington Post*. He had later figures than the *Post* had; what he wanted to see was how the newspaper had dressed the comforting facts. His eye lighted on that word "chaos."

What was chaos? Obviously the headliner's idea of chaos was the lack of a responsible party majority in either House, opening the way to a pact on legislation between the Democrats and the Progressive Republicans. But, in view of the uneasiness of business, the greased incline of the stock market, the nervousness of the American people generally, Mr. Shouse feared that the mental association of the word would be with the gains made by his party at the election. Thereupon—the account comes from one of the Seven Signers—Mr. Shouse determined to issue a proclamation of reassurance to the millions who still take Democratic political victory as tantamount to re-opening that Pandora's box of legislation closed by the left hand of Death when he laid his right on the shoulder of William Jennings Bryan.

Mr. Shouse is a born, bred, temperamental Democrat. He entered politics in

Kentucky, and he was elected to Congress from Kansas. He knew enough of the nature of his fellow-partisans to realize that usually no one man can speak for more than one of them—himself. How about a Pledge Committee of Titular Leaders? The morning in Washington was clear, with a high of 44 degrees. It was weather to transmute inspiration into action. Within a few hours the pledge was carefully drawn, with the aid probably of the chief of the Democratic Publicity Bureau. Soon it was being read over the telephone to the six others, the weight of whose names was needed to hold down such a document, even for a week.

The weather was clear that day in New York City also, and John W. Davis, Alfred E. Smith and John J. Raskob gazed out on sunlit streets as they listened. At Dayton James M. Cox also saw the sun. It was a cloudy day in Arkansas and Texas, where Joseph T. Robinson, the Senate minority leader, and John N. Garner, Democratic chief in the House, sat at the end of long-distance receivers. But the temperature was higher than in the East. At any rate these seven groundhogs saw no shadow on the proclamation. They signed. What exactly did they say?

A remarkable victory has come to the Democratic party. We, however, regard it less as a political triumph than as a great opportunity for constructive service. . . . Despite the opposition of the Democrats and the Progressive wing of the Republican party, and over the protest of leading economists of the nation, that [the tariff] bill was forced on the country by the brutal strength of numbers and was signed by the President.

Two pitfalls have been jumped or circumvented here: (1) If business was at all disturbed over the failure of the two major parties to gain control of Congress, that was of course because it feared a

Democratic-Progressive coalition, with Messrs. Norris, Brookhart and Nye shaping the features of legislation, but since it was tactics to take a crack at the tariff for the purpose of reminding industry of one reason for its illness, the opposition of the Progressives had to be mentioned; (2) since only five Democratic Senators had voted for the tariff bill, the party could be represented as officially in opposition. True, without these five votes the bill would have failed of passage in the Senate, but most people would not notice that. To proceed:

The leaders of Democracy . . . and the others who must now assume legislative responsibility do not regard the present occasion as one for celebration or for self-gratification. . . . The task ahead is to repair the damage, to get the ship of state back on an even keel, and to go ahead on a course which will bring us out of the tempest with the least disturbance and the greatest speed consistent with safety.

The Signers, on behalf of their party, disavowed "all thought of political advantage." They pledged that "the Seventy-Second Congress will not be an obstructive body." It would seek to coöperate with Mr. Hoover, not to embarrass him, "in every measure that conduces to the welfare of the country. It has in mind no rash policies." No necessary appointments or appropriations would be blockaded; the tariff would be revised piecemeal; if any politics was played the "other party" would be to blame.

The President received the pledge with delight and surprise. Senator Watson of Indiana, the Republican leader in the Senate, made an answer reminiscent of the merchant who, on being reconciled with his rival by the rabbi, said: "I wish you what you wish me." Newspaper comment was favorable. The idea behind the pledge was undoubtedly constructive. The elec-

tion was over. Such advantage as the Democrats gained from a falling market, falling commodity prices and business slackness had been garnered for two years. If times grew steadily worse the old Democratic bogles might be successfully invoked to frighten the voters back into the Republican party. For it is a fact that while the American people, when they are pinched economically, register a protest against the party in power, if they face major disaster they are more inclined to abide by Lincoln's adage about the horses and the stream. The stakes for which the leaders were playing were the presidential elections of 1932.

II

But there is a spirit in the Democratic party which has always operated against the fact and implication of such a paper as that signed by Messrs. Cox, Davis, Smith, Robinson, Garner, Raskob and Shouse. That spirit was soon manifest in Senator Glass of Virginia. He has been a Secretary of the Treasury. He is the co-author of the Federal Reserve Act. He is not a titular leader, as are the Seven. But he is a highland chieftain whose bagpipes can summon many joyously to battle.

Carter Glass is respected in the Democratic party for his abilities and for his integrity of mind and heart. Yet what quickens the pulses of the Celts (who make up so large a portion of the party) at the mention of his name is that he can always be depended upon to start or join a scrap. Five days after the Pledge was issued, Mr. Glass dipped pen into sulphuric acid and on asbestos paper expressed his views of any who thought that an "apology" was required for a Democratic victory at the elections. He questioned the authority of "any undelegated

group of gentlemen" to pledge 264 Democrats in Congress "to a precipitately devised course of action." He himself "had not reached the rank of a party leader," wrote the Virginian scathingly.

Out in the country Democrats who had read the Pledge and the press commendations with doubtful but favorably inclined hearts dilated their nostrils. Here was the old-time religion. "To be required to temper his speech; to pretend to cherish the interests of capital; and to attempt to convey the manifestly impossible admission that a Republican may have blood, brains, piety and worth in the same degree as a Democrat—these are the responsibilities of an open fight before the electorate which bore with inexpressible ennui the true disciple of Jefferson and Jackson. It is a combat with other Democrats which a true Jeffersonian really enjoys. To that he advances at the double, carrying every lethal weapon in his vocal arsenal. Parents, brothers, cousins: let any of these bar his path as with nervous fingers he rushes toward the jugular of another Democrat, and patricide and fratricide become mere misdemeanors." This spiritual estimate of the party, which I wrote in *THE AMERICAN MERCURY* for March, 1925, assaying the passionate pleasures of the Madison Square Garden Convention of 1924, remains true. Senator Glass became the new hero. Elected members clipped his statement from the paper and put it in their Washington wallets. Its soul goes marching on.

The present, or lame duck session was not a day old before Senator McKellar and Representative Byrns, both of Tennessee, were declaring that Congress, not the President, should manage the distribution of the Unemployment Fund. Mr. McKellar, instinctively thinking of an appropriation as something his constituency

should share in, proposed that each county in the United States be given an equal portion of the fund. Just like a post-office bill in which Memphis must be taken care of! The Senate in that same first week, at the instance of Senator Robinson of Arkansas, increased the fund for drought and flood from \$25,000,000 to \$60,000,000 at the very moment the House was cutting the President's unemployment budget from \$150,000,000 to \$110,000,000. As conferences and negotiations proceeded sums were changed; the President indiscriminately charged Congress was "playing politics at the expense of human misery", and Congress erased all party lines to rebuff him; the old game was played in meticulous observance of rules laid down when the first semi-humans gathered in groups in the Stone Age. In that first week Congress made it perfectly clear:

1. That its political-mindedness is unchangeable.
2. That politicians will fight, at least a little, over who shall rescue the drowning body politic, even when the victim is going down for the third time.
3. That the final two years of any President's administration are bad years for coalitions in this country.

III

Upon Mr. Robinson of Arkansas, more than upon any other of the Seven Signers, fell what criticism there was for the Pledge of November 6. For in a sense Mr. Robinson has been distrusted by his followers since he went to London as a delegate to the Naval Disarmament Conference. This is not an inheritance of the struggle between the English party of George Washington and the French party of Thomas Jefferson. If Mr. Robinson had gone to Paris instead of London for a conference, on the appointment of a Re-

publican President, the distrust would still have existed. The late Senator Underwood of Alabama, a man more used to tea-parties and morning coats than Mr. Robinson is, engendered the same uneasiness when he accepted a similar wand from President Harding. The very Democrats who criticized Woodrow Wilson for not putting Elihu Root and William Howard Taft on the Paris Peace Mission in 1919 muttered that Joe had gone White House. There isn't much sense in the suspicion, but it is in the nature of Democrats to feel that way.

Mr. Robinson went to London because he enjoyed the distinction, because he welcomed the opportunity for public service, because he is a candidate for President. In his heart there is implanted that same dark, almost racial prejudice against a Republican which stirs in the breast of the longest-haired county judge in the Mississippi cane-brakes. Many times he has revealed it. But since coming to the Senate he has improved his wardrobe. He has been seen in spats and a morning coat. He spent three months in London and is known to have followed civilized usages there. Mr. Underwood's attire and propensity to drink tea were fixed before he was elected to the House, years before he was translated to the Senate. The outer person of Mr. Robinson has undergone a change. Couple this fact with the inevitable tempering of speech and viewpoint that comes with age, broader experience and the responsibility of leadership, and you have a combination which arouses anxious fear in the agrarian Democratic heart. If his alarmed followers could see the Arkansan at breakfast at 4:30 o'clock in South Carolina, preliminary to a duck-hunt, they might be reassured as to the essential purity of his heart. The appetite and diet of those who have never seen a Republican,

the careless costume of a Black river guide are, I assure them, his natural expression. If the minority could all go duck-hunting, Mr. Robinson's leadership would not be questioned again. As each day of this session brings the parties nearer to 1932 I feel certain that it will be said less and less that Joe has gone White House. He as much as the others has his eye fixed on the presidential stakes.

There is no greater and more easily disproved lie than the steady Republican claim to greater fitness for governing, and for creating prosperity. Yet there are millions of people in the country who can still, after the Hoover panic, be made to believe it again. Never before, as in 1930, did the Democratic party have so many major issues in its favor: Prohibition, economic depression, the President's personal unpopularity, national antagonism to a trade-killing tariff. That it carried neither the House nor the Senate under such conditions is a demonstration of the still-lingering popular fear of its ascendancy. The men who conceived and framed the coöperation statement sought to capture and tame this obvious psychology. Senator Robinson realizes the fact and would create, by agreement with the Republicans when advisable, what Mulvaney called a "divarshion." He knows the temptations which the Progressives will spread in the sessions to be held before the elections of 1932. A personnel, instinct with a wish to spoil the Republicans, resentful of Mr. Hoover because he was almost a Democrat once and gained his opportunity through a Democratic President, will find it impossible to resist all these temptations. Mr. Robinson and the other signers would like to hold down cattle-stealing forays to a minimum, believing that they will serve to bring out in 1932 those Republican votes which stayed at home in 1930.

An examination of the New York figures for November 4 supports this conscious fear of what Republican majorities there can be in this country. Governor Roosevelt was reëlected by more than 725,000 plurality. He carried the up-State counties, traditionally as Republican as Vermont. But his party did not reverse one Congressional district. In one, the Seventeenth, New York City's dislike of the President and his policies might have swept Representative Ruth Pratt out of office, but the entertaining candidacy on the Socialist ticket of Heywood Broun attracted sufficient Democrats to save her. There is no evidence here of deep party feeling. In 1928 Roosevelt polled 370,000 more votes than he did last November. But Ottinger, the weak Republican candidate of that day, had almost 900,000 more than were cast for his party's nominee last year. In other States the story is the same. If the Democrats obstruct useful legislation on partisan grounds, and vote often with the Progressives in the Senate, those voters who gave the Hoover ticket in 1928 a majority of 8,000,000 will come from their sulking tents. The way to 1932 for the Democrats is paved with eggs; the Republicans in 1930 broke most of theirs, but they learned to walk more carefully hereafter.

Actually at the last election the country rejected both parties. In 1932 it must take choice of one. Which class will win the prize for good behavior? By a mix-up of the babies, the Republicans are more embarrassed over the Prohibition question than are the Democrats who invented the issue. Hard times, if they persist, are not certain to return the Opposition, particularly if by death and change the Democrats get control of one of the branches of Congress and share in responsibility for the conduct of national affairs. But the

last election showed that in the States where the great blocks of electoral votes come from, Prohibition is influencing the selections of candidates. For the present the Democrats have the advantage there. Political prophets are especially without honor, and their words are writ in mist, which is even less substantial than water. But it doesn't take much of a prophet to predict that, unless the next Democratic candidate combines, as Smith did, all the phobias the South is heir to, he will not, merely because he is a Wet, lose many electoral votes in that region.

If Democrats had less individualism they would not be Democrats. They are reared on the meat of insurrection and the she-wolf's milk. But this individualism, and this restiveness under leadership, this sporting urgency to upset what smooth, fat men around a mahogany table decide is best for the country, procreates many men of mark. Given more discipline and greater natural numbers of voters in this country, the Democrats undoubtedly would win the stakes of 1932. Above the even level of Republicanism there rise the heads of the President, the ex-President and Senator Morrow of New Jersey. Except for these the party has available no "made men" in the sense that they begin with a national appeal. There are whole States against Senator Borah. But there is no State where Hoover and Coolidge have not a large following at election.

On the Democratic side the tall men of war, known to every community in the Nation, are actually numerous. There is Smith, destined never to be President, I think, but to millions the ideal public servant. There is Newton D. Baker, peace's pale paladin, touched with that eminence which brings a hush into court-rooms and auditoriums when he rises to speak. There is Franklin D. Roosevelt, mantled with

the prestige that comes with two victories in New York, the bulge of nearly a hundred delegates in his waistcoat pocket. Governor Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland has few delegates and possibly fewer prospects; but what Smith and Morrow and Roosevelt and Lewis were saying effectively about Prohibition from 1928 forward Ritchie had been saying, and with greater scholarship, from the time the Volstead Act was passed. And, held in reserve for a deadlocked intervention, is the calm, handsome, powerful, rich, studious architect of Europe's reparations structure, Owen D. Young. There is none of these who could not lie with fair ease in the bed of Procrustes at 1600 Pennsylvania avenue. But, even if there were enough natural Democratic votes in the country, any of these would still be a long shot for the Presidency two years hence because of what can happen at Washington if the Democrats should obtain control, or should consolidate it through union with the Progressives.

It isn't fair, but it is true none the less, that the Democrats will be punished for doing what the regular Republicans can do safely. That is, combine with the Progressives. The election of 1930 was only three weeks past when Representative Snell of New York, Shem of the House Ark, tied an olive-branch on the foot of a dove and sent it to Senator Norris of Nebraska. Now, this Norris is to a regular Republican what Robespierre was to the Princesse de Lamballe. In 1910 he clipped the power of Speaker Cannon and tried to unseat him. From that day forward he has opposed the basic tenets of his party's policy. In 1928 he spoke and voted for Smith on the ground that his own party's position on water power was "corporate and anti-public." In 1930 he was reelected as Republican nominee with the general

understanding that he would make Mr. Hoover's life as wretched as possible.

Yet it was to Mr. Norris that Mr. Snell sent the promise of the House organization that it would yield to him on Muscle Shoals, and the bill to abolish henceforth the lame duck session, in order to expediate routine business and avoid a special sitting of the new Congress after March 4. "Very sensible," said the Republican newspapers. "Constructive statesman, Snell." The move was made not only to avoid an extra session, but to try to save something of the party's control in the Seventy-second Congress. There is no more resemblance between a Republican like Snell and a Republican like Norris than there is between Mussolini and Mrs. Ella Boole. But Republicans have a gift for shameless compromise without injury to themselves; the country understands and approves it as practical business procedure under the common label. Let the Democrats make terms with the Progressives to take control of Congress and pass a legislative programme, and Republican orators and newspapers would cry "Socialism!" Then from every street and country lane the Republican vote which sulked in 1930 would come running to stamp under the Log Cabin.

IV

There has been a great deal of natural talk about "the great Democratic victory" last November. The Seven Signers assumed it in their statement, for frankness in these compositions is as yet unknown. But the men who put their names below are aware, if the headline readers are not, that they had a set-up in 1930 and were not able to reach his lower maxillary. As

political tacticians they knew that the inner threat in the result could be shouted away; as realists they understood also that the Democratic party is in better case than if it had won control. For control brings responsibility for legislation, and that will be no asset in the next two years.

The country allowed them a membership large enough to claim and obtain a share in the district spoils; to fill a conspicuous place in the record with their dissent; to participate in credits for relief measures on a general scale; and to avoid that blame for unsatisfactory results which goes to initiators of programmes. This is more advantage than the Democrats have won in any election since 1910. After that event the Republicans, temporarily borrowing the traditional claymore of Democracy, put on such a flawless imitation of the ordinary fratricidal conflict of the foe as to do away with themselves. The Roosevelt-Taft contest was so noisy, brutal and bloody that the highly-entertained Democrats were able—up to the Baltimore convention—to keep for once from joining battle themselves out of sheer love of fighting. By the time Champ Clark and Bryan were embroiled the Republicans were weak with blood-letting. A Democratic President was the result.

Prohibition is not, like T. R., incarnate, and may not therefore wreak among the Republicans of 1932 butchery equal to his in 1912. The Seventy-second Congress will tell the story. Meanwhile the Democrats must be very good, keep no weapons in their own cloakrooms, "and do just as their leaders tell 'em to." Two years of this, unless the Republicans put on as good a show as Taft and Roosevelt did, is punishment cruel and unusual—undenurable to the highland breed.

HOORAW FOR VANCE!

BY PHILLIPS RUSSELL

IN THE Autumn of 1861 the young and breezy Captain Zebulon B. Vance, long of hair and roguish of eye, who had brought his Rough and Ready Guards from the mountains of Buncombe county, North Carolina, into the Confederate Army, was elected colonel of the Twenty-sixth North Carolina Regiment fighting General Burnside, of the Union Army, on the Carolina coast. The Southern West Pointers shook their heads; this Vance was not a soldier, but a mountain lawyer who had won verdicts by breaking down the prosecution with funny stories.

For instance, when his lieutenant-colonel, Harry Burgwyn—afterwards killed leading the Twenty-sixth in Pickett's charge at Gettysburg—had reproached him for his disregard of military forms, saying: "Look here, Colonel, you simply *can't* have the men *shoulder* arms right after they have *presented* them," Vance replied:

"By gravy, I've already done it!"

But among the Tar Heel privates Vance's election caused shouts of joy. He was solidly their man. Soldiering, even when done in a sacred cause, had its dull hours, and if they had a leader who could cure depression with a sportive humor, so much the better.

Already the regiment was storing up a fund of Vance stories—stories which in the telling gave birth to whole families of tales that are a treasured part of North Carolina lore to this day.

There was the story of the skirmish at

Goose Creek, for example, when a tall and long-armed private tied his clothes on his head and swam over the stream. He landed with his rifle still in his hand, but unfortunately he had lost his bundle. At that very moment Vance came up, ordered him into line with other survivors, and sternly put them through the manual of drill, with the unfortunate private as naked as a jay-bird and unable even to clothe himself with a sweet-gum leaf. Afterwards Vance went around to the victim's tent and had a good laugh with him.

"Hooraw for Vance!"

And so the Twenty-sixth went on fighting cheerfully and getting decimated without complaint, for the South, in those days, was winning. But it was true that Vance was no military man, and soon his people recalled him from the field and put him where they needed him more, in the Governor's chair at Raleigh.

They wanted him there because, although they were still ardent for the Confederate cause, they had become afraid of Confederate militarism. The government at Richmond was showing its teeth, overriding States' rights, and Confederate officers were disregarding the civil authorities. Already North Carolinians, like other Southerners, were tasting the horrible contradictions of the war: they wanted an effective government, and yet they clung to States' rights; they wanted a winning army, and yet they would have its leaders curbed; they realized the necessity of unity,