

THIRD PARTY FANTASY

BY MAURITZ A. HALLGREN

IF THE signs of the moment do not fail me, we are to be treated to another delightfully inept and utterly unrealistic third party campaign in 1932.

Waves of sincere but futile moral indignation will sweep over the country. Abuse will be heaped in liberal quantities upon Mr. Hoover, the Democrats, the Power Trust, the bankers, and all the rest of the rugged individuals who have been lucky enough or crooked enough to get away with overly large shares of the political and economic loot which always lies ready to hand in a plutocracy such as ours. The voters will be challenged to put an end to the predacious rule of the Republicans and Democrats, all the profits of which have gone to the more powerful and wealthier of Mr. Mellon's friends. In place of the customary makeshift platforms of the two major parties the electorate will be offered a hopeful and plausible Progressive platform built along neo-Socialistic lines (but sufficiently disguised and diluted to ensnare the more timid Americans).

There, however, the third party leaders are likely to stop. That they will go further and attempt to establish their own competency to run the government, or give proof that they can keep their party together long enough to carry out the more essential of their flaming promises, seems too much to hope for. And when the votes are counted, and it is found that the people are willing to worry along yet a while under the dictatorship of Mr.

Hoover or someone like him, the third party leaders can be expected to shed a brief but bitter tear, not for their own political stupidity, but for that of the voters who refused to follow them into Utopia.

Lest I be misunderstood I want to make it clear at the start that I myself want a new party, and for the same reasons as those put forward by the Progressives (a term meant to apply to all rebels, ranging from the activist Liberals to the conservative Socialists). I am one of the dissenters who cannot much longer stomach the mealy-mouthedness of our Hoovers and the ponderous truisms of our Coolidges; who are convinced that our present economic and political leadership has proven itself wholly incompetent; who sincerely believe that society as a whole ought to get at least an even break with the few wealthy industrialists and other such economic wise men who now rule us. In short, I feel that as long as we pretend to being a democracy we ought to function as such and not be content to sit back and let a gang of dull and tiresome political fellows manage our affairs for the benefit of a privileged few.

More than that, in my professional capacity I have written innumerable editorials and articles looking toward the creation of a new political party. I have gone about the country discussing the question with labor leaders, lawyers, politicians, school teachers and business men. It may

be that I am wrong; it may be that the people simply have not the capacity for ruling themselves; but the point I want to make is that my political views and sympathies are identical with those of the Progressives who are now demanding a political revolution. At only one point do I differ from them. I believe that it takes courage, patience and common sense to build a new party.

II

There are two kinds of Progressives in this country, those who are active in politics and those who are not, the politicians and the intellectuals. The latter deserve the more attention because they are the people who are laboring under the delusion that politics is some sort of parlor game. The nonpolitical Progressives are grouped in dozens of leagues and societies and associations, most of which, for some inexplicable reason or other, have their headquarters and the bulk of their memberships in New York City instead of out in the grass root country whence Senator Borah expects a people's party may some day spring. Some of these leagues are organized for one purpose, some for another, but each is working in its own peculiar fashion against conservatism, that is, against the economic and political system now in the hands of Mr. Hoover's rugged individualists.

Unfortunately, the conservatives occupy their present high places of power and privilege, not entirely because they control the political machinery, nor entirely because they have the great influence that immense wealth bestows upon them, nor yet because they own all the various engines of public opinion, but primarily and foremost because they fully appreciate the value of unity and organization. In other

words, they have sense enough to hang together. So long as they sit tight they can be budged from their strongly entrenched position only by a massed and completely coördinated attack. Such is warfare, even in politics. Clearly the strategical requirements of the situation call for unity among the Progressives and moderate radicals. Yet these people refuse to get together; they seemingly cannot agree upon a goal or even upon a common course of action.

If this were peculiar to the current Progressive campaign, one might be more charitable in discussing their deficiencies, but it has been true of every attempt made by the intellectuals and Progressives in the last hundred years to organize a liberal or left-wing party. The 1827 labor movement, the George Henry Evans movement of the '40s, the Liberal Republican revolt of 1872, the National Greenback party of 1876, the abortive Farmer-Labor party launched in Cleveland two years later, the Henry George campaign of 1886, and the many other gestures toward a permanent political organization of simon-pure Progressives all met the same fate through the incapacity of the organizers to establish and maintain unity among themselves.

Today there exists the same division and confusion. The 1931 intellectuals and Progressives are sadly and needlessly divided into several petty groups. They play with slogans—industrial democracy, social justice, a planned economy, economic freedom—instead of turning their talents to the development of a simple, concise and fundamentally sound philosophy upon which the majority might agree. They lose themselves in fantastic and divergent ideas when they should be working out a substantial and realizable programme. They are given to quarreling among themselves and with their logical allies, the political

Progressives. They publicly accuse the insurgents in Washington of lacking courage because the latter can see no point in sacrificing the advanced position they have won for the privilege of losing themselves in the confusion of lay Progressivism. They refuse to join forces with the Socialists, although most of their principles are undeniably socialistic, simply because Socialism has a bad name among many Americans. They shudder at the very thought of getting into politics themselves, notwithstanding that it is there that most of the battles in which they pretend to be engaged are being actively fought. Radicals these intellectuals doubtless are, but they are both afraid and ashamed of their radicalism, preferring to hide behind terms like "social control" and "social planning."

In England, Germany and other civilized lands the more sincere intellectuals never hesitate to take some part in the political activities of their respective countries. Sometimes they get elected to office and sometimes they go to jail. Here they shrink from both not altogether unpleasant duties, electing rather to rely upon the vigor of their tongues and typewriters, upon emotional after-dinner discussions, and upon lofty and visionary but conflicting plans to bring them the political and economic salvation they are seeking.

Thus, by abstaining from political activity, the lay progressives have not acquired, and cannot acquire, the practical and realistic political knowledge necessary to carry them to success. Without this knowledge they could never hope to keep together any independent party that might be born of the momentary enthusiasm of a popular revolt. Moreover, lacking training in government, they could not hope to make any sort of decent showing should their party by some good fortune come

into power. Hence the intellectuals are defeating their own ends by clinging to their high moral perch when they ought to be down wallowing in the gutter of politics. They complain about the stench from this gutter, but they will not do anything with their own hands to help clean it out.

Political parties are built neither upon moral indignation nor upon the fleeting ardor of a temporarily aroused electorate. A party organization is in actuality a complex network of local, State and national committees. These committees, to quote Bryce's able summary,

have plenty to do, for the winning of elections is a toilsome and costly business. Funds have to be raised, meetings organized, [voters] recruited for the party and enrolled as its members, lists of voters and their residences prepared, literature produced and diffused, and other forms of party propaganda attended to, and when the day of election arrives party tickets must be provided and distributed, canvassers and other election workers organized and paid, voters brought up to the polls. Each committee keeps touch with the next above it in a larger electoral area, and with that below it in a smaller, so that, taken altogether, these bodies constitute a network, strong and flexible, stretching over the whole Union. They are an army kept on war footing, always ready for action when each election comes round.

Do we observe the lay Progressives who want a new party hurrying out to organize such committees? Or is this third party to be built without organization, the voters coming out of their own volition to sweep it into office and to keep it there? Or perhaps the plan is to leave this menial task of organization to the professional politicians now on the payrolls of the conservative parties.

Unhappily, I believe that neither of the last named alternatives will work. If the

Progressives really want a new party, they must stop mapping out programmes, making speeches, and distributing literature to the exclusion of more essential activities. If they really want a new party, they will have to knuckle down to work (disagreeable as that might appear to be). They will have to go into the wards and other small electoral areas where they stand some chance of winning, organize these areas effectively and efficiently; then go on to larger districts, and finally tackle entire States; and when they have a sufficient number of State organizations actually in power they can begin to hope for national success. The process will be slow and arduous and often disheartening, but final victory may come within twenty or thirty years, if the Progressives do not mess things up at the start by chasing after some impossible third party dream in 1932 or 1936.

Lacking this intricate and basic organization, every third party movement since the Civil War has failed. Every one of these parties sought to capture the White House before it had sunk its roots deeply and firmly into the precincts and wards of the country, and every one of them found overreaching fatal. So would it be in 1932. The Progressives are already talking quietly of a presidential ticket, but any such independent ticket would be offered the voters under false pretenses. It could not be otherwise. In turning to a new party sufficiently radical to be distinguished from either of the present major parties the people would be entitled to ask for some guarantee of permanency, for some assurance that the party would live long enough to accomplish at least the most essential of its reforms; but no spontaneous presidential ticket presented by an independent group at this time could extend any such assurance.

The millions who voted for Roosevelt in 1912 and for La Follette in 1924 might have been held together if there had been a permanent network of party committees organized to keep this vote intact; but the voters were, in fact, deceived by the implied promise that the Progressives had something substantial to give them in the way of a party to which they could attach themselves. In neither case did a party really exist; after the froth and foam of the campaign had been wiped away, the voters, who had been given a glimpse of the promised land, were suddenly and unceremoniously let down.

Likewise a third party movement in 1932, at least one conducted by the intellectuals and lay Liberals, would of necessity have to be based upon fictitious premisses, not only in that the leaders could not honestly guarantee the party's continued existence after the campaign, but that they could not even give any reasonable assurance that the party would be found competent to take over the government were it to succeed at the polls. It may be true that the intellectuals are learned in theory, and it may be true that they feel utterly confident that they would be able to take up without a hitch the tasks which experienced politicians are now carrying on. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that there are very few men and women among them with sufficient experience and practice in government to give the country as a whole any real hope that they would run the government smoothly and efficiently.

After all, the government is a huge and complicated piece of machinery that can be operated only by experienced men; it will not run on theories alone. The politicians now in charge may be dishonest and dull-witted and slaves of the moneyed interests, but they do know how to handle

the technical end of government. Opposed to their expert knowledge what have the Progressives to offer? Who among them can run the State Department, or the Commerce Department, or any of the other highly technical branches of government? They could train themselves, of course, in the minor offices, in the municipalities and States, and thus create the talent necessary to the successful functioning of the national government. At the same time that they hold these minor offices they could be building up their national party organization. As a matter of fact, they must follow this course if they would succeed, for in the final analysis no party can achieve national status that has not its roots in these minor government posts. This the Progressives surely cannot hope to accomplish between July and November of 1932.

III

It is amusing to observe the lay Progressives, who have no position whatever in politics and apparently have no disposition to get into politics, laying down the law to the political Progressives, the insurgents in Washington. Personally I have no considerable respect for the astuteness or skill of the insurgents as a group. Writing from Washington last November, I asserted that

even among the Progressives, who really should have intelligence enough to appreciate the extraordinary opportunity the chaos in the ranks of their enemies has presented them, there is an air of helplessness. Thus far they have been unable to unite upon a definite, concrete programme. They do not seem to understand the strategic value in rallying behind a single, forceful leader.

In another place I wrote of these earnest but futile men that

they lack leadership and organization. They move as independent units, and not as a solid phalanx toward a common goal. They are on the whole a group of intelligent and unquestionably sincere men, but each of them is going his own private way with his own legislative programme. At many points these programmes coincide; at other places they wander far afield. Is it any wonder that the regulars among the Republicans and Democrats take lightly the aspirations and political strength of the Progressives?

Moreover, one does not feel naturally comfortable in the company of such a man as Smith Wildman Brookhart. One may never feel quite sure that he will not afterward publish to the world the fact of some private peccadillo or unconscious misdemeanor that may have come to his attention. One also tires rather easily of his constant sobbing and wailing over what he is pleased to call Mellonism. Certainly there are other Liberals in the country who are just as frankly disgusted with Secretary Mellon and his nefarious toiling in behalf of the upper brackets, but these Liberals would much rather see something done about it than to hear Senator Brookhart forever bemoaning the fact that it is not done.

Then there is the case of Robert Beecher Howell, who tried to fasten upon the disfranchised residents of the District of Columbia a model Prohibition enforcement law that would have made Wayne Wheeler's best work look like the product of a Tom Paine. Going further, we find Henrik Shipstead in sad plight for a Farmer-Labor delegate. The good doctor of dentistry stands in a fair way of falling victim to the pernicious social lobby in Washington; society and its glamor have him all but roped and tagged. Others of these insurgents, with perhaps four exceptions, might be mentioned in similar vein, but

quite enough has been said to demonstrate that as independent Liberals and Progressives most of them fall short of the mark.

Nevertheless, despite this discouraging showing, it is only to this group (if the Socialists continue as visionary, impractical or downright stupid as they have been in the past) that we can look for a nucleus for a genuine Progressive party. This faction already has a secure foothold in politics. Senator La Follette has a State organization actually in power in Wisconsin, Senator Cutting is similarly well-fixed in New Mexico, and there are excellent prospects of Senator Costigan's winning control in Colorado. At least a half dozen other States can be counted upon. With twenty State organizations like these in hand a national party could without doubt be created. The party would be managed by experienced politicians and by men versed in the difficult ways of government. It would be grounded in a strong and flexible system of local and other committees, and thus would have a very definite chance of permanently maintaining itself. Finally, there is every reason to believe that once the insurgents who would lead this party had cast loose from their present party ties they would move much further to the left than they dare now stand.

Here, then, is a nucleus for a new party, which could easily be expanded into a national party were the lay Progressives to turn to and capture a few State organizations in the East, where the Western insurgents have made no inroads whatever. But the intellectuals will have none of it. They harass and embarrass the insurgent group by thoughtless gestures, widely published, and by gratuitous and unconsidered sneers. If they could, they would destroy it, for in its turn it is a source of embarrassment for them. The intellectuals and lay Progressives charge the Washington

rebels with lacking backbone because they will not demolish the small but nevertheless tangible and effective party machinery they possess and join with these intellectuals in building anew from the bottom. It is asserted that the insurgents have and can have only a negative influence, that they act merely as a brake upon the major parties, hampering them in executing some of their more vicious policies, and that therefore the insurgents cannot be considered progressive. Hence (having failed to induce them to organize and lead a new party) the intellectuals have shunted the insurgents aside as being unworthy of the as yet unborn Progressive movement.

It would appear to the conscientious bystander that the lay Progressives would have had a much stronger case had they themselves been united upon a common goal, a common programme and a common course of action. Certainly they could have had no real hope of persuading the hardheaded politicians among the rebels in Washington that the confusion, indecision and nebulous though perhaps idealistic plans of the lay Progressives, their lack of reality and unity, and their lack of leadership, were more valuable to the Progressive cause than the power the insurgents were actually wielding in Congress, limited as that power might be.

Being in office, the insurgents have one other advantage that the intellectuals do not enjoy. They can and do use their political positions as centers of education and propaganda. Whereas the lay Progressives get little or no public attention, the speeches and comments of the Washington insurgents are widely circulated. That there is genuine public interest in Norris and La Follette is recognized in virtually every newspaper office in the country, and their utterances and ideas are dealt with accordingly in the news

columns, however they may be maligned in the editorial columns.

It is true that these ideas do not represent unadulterated Progressivism or radicalism as the intellectuals would have them, but none the less the extensive publicity they obtain is by far more effective as propaganda than all the literature the lay Progressives can distribute, all the speeches they can make, and all the other educational work they can accomplish. When George Norris or Bob La Follette gets up to talk he is listened to as a United States Senator; when the spokesmen of the various Liberal and Progressive leagues address this or that audience they do so as parlor pinks. The intellectuals could overcome this difficulty by getting into politics themselves, but so long as they consider that participation in politics is beneath them the public cannot be blamed for tagging them with unpleasant labels or for ignoring them altogether.

The Socialists also offer a possible center about which a Progressive or moderately radical party might be developed. However, they have only one advantage that the Washington insurgents lack, and they lack several advantages that the Norris-La Follette group could bring to a new party. The Socialists have a permanent national organization. Much of the spadework which the Progressives would have to do could be spared them by an alliance with this organization. However, the name of the party would probably have to be sacrificed, not because it is a fundamental liability, but because the intellectuals lack the courage necessary to attack that one of our national superstitions which has brought the term Socialism into disrepute. A second obstacle to the alliance would be found in the doctrinaire quality of the Socialist programme, and this may prove fairly hard for most of our pragmatic and

opportunistic intellectuals to swallow. Thirdly, the Socialists are in power in only two communities, Reading, Pa., and Milwaukee, Wis., whereas the insurgents have several States under their control. Lastly, the Socialists have shown little true capacity for American politics.

Their retention of their national headquarters in Chicago is an example of this. Were these offices to be removed to Washington, they would get a much better break in the way of publicity and propaganda. It is not only because the White House and Congress are near at hand that the Republican and Democratic national committees have their offices in the national capital, but also, or perhaps primarily, because there are in Washington some three to four hundred newspaper correspondents who are trained in politics and who live on handouts and statements from the politicians. (The decision of the Socialists to open a publicity office in Washington, instead of setting up the main works there, is too thin an attempt to take advantage of the Washington publicity mill to get very far with the correspondents.)

The Socialists have also fallen into an error typical of most minor or third parties. They have been squandering their money and wasting their strength in trying to win every political office in sight, from the Presidency down. They might instead have been concentrating their financial, oratorical and political resources in those districts where they had a reasonable chance of succeeding, and thus they could probably have won any number of seats in municipal councils and State Legislatures, and perhaps more than a few in Congress. The party would thereby have achieved a standing that it does not have today (because of the average American's natural tendency to sniff at failure while applauding success), and these posts

could, moreover, have been used, after the manner of the Washington insurgents and other practical politicians, as centers of education and propaganda. An alliance with the Socialists would not provide every advantage that could be desired, but it would in any event be much better than the drifting policy the intellectuals and lay Progressives are now following.

IV

Earlier in this article I suggested that the intellectuals were afraid of their radicalism. One pertinent example of this timidity is to be observed in their habit of heaving bricks at the national administration instead of heaving bombs at the voters responsible for that administration. So long as the people are steeped in the mythology of democracy and prosperity they cannot be won over by any such attacks upon their gods in Washington. More could be gained were the intellectuals to go out among the people and preach, not revolution, but revolutionary ideas, for it is only by an intellectual awakening that the people will come fully to realize to what extent they are being duped by their subservience to the reigning plutocracy.

I fear, however, that the lay Progressives, who have not enough courage to get into politics, would simply gag at the thought of preaching revolutionary ideas. They insist upon advocating Socialism in its several modern disguises, but they either are unable or unwilling to try and break down the popular resistance to Socialism or honest Progressivism. The real fight is out among the people, in the factories, on the farms, on the streets, and it will never be won by dinner conferences in New York City or by addressing endless formal demands to Mr. Hoover.

Summing up these intellectuals, we find that they lack courage, that they have neither unity nor organization, that they have no common programme, that they hesitate to take any active part in politics, and that they refuse to work in harness with either of the two groups who might be of substantial assistance to them, the Socialists or the Washington insurgents. However, the intellectuals can by no means be dismissed as persons of little or no consequence. They include hundreds of editors, writers, lawyers, economists, scientists, university professors, clergymen, and even a few score prominent bankers and business men, almost all of whom hold positions of considerable authority and influence. They have no little power, even as individuals, but I am very much afraid that unless and until they put their movement upon an effective, organized basis and gather sufficient courage to enter politics we cannot look to them for the guidance and leadership necessary to the organization of a Progressive or radical party.

Nor does it seem that we can hope for anything vital or valuable from the present Socialist organization. The Socialists have a programme and they have the framework of a party, but, if we except a few men like Norman Thomas, they have no active and experienced leaders, men schooled in politics or government. Moreover, they are seriously handicapped by the doctrinal quality of their philosophy and programme. The Western Progressives offer something more tangible, but here again a programme and unity are absent. This group is essentially agrarian, and thus far it has been unable to adapt itself to the needs of the wage-earners, salaried workers and professional people of the East. It cannot be said that the Western Progressives are in want of trained lead-

ers; their difficulty is that they are all leaders; the group has too many bosses and not enough quiet and faithful workers willing to toil unnoticed.

While these are the elements out of which a real Progressive or radical party must be fashioned, their failure to get together leaves the field of government wide open for the conservatives, and it is on this field alone that the economic and social reformers can operate with any sane expectation of success. It is also on this field alone that capitalism or conservatism can ever be seriously challenged, for while capitalism can function with a minimum of government, its only practical alternatives, Socialism and Communism, must by their very nature be founded upon government.

Capitalism may collapse of its own weight, as the Marxians firmly believe will happen, but the resultant breakdown in our political and economic structure will not in that event wait until the Progressives and radicals have time to organize themselves for the purpose of taking over the government. Instead we shall more likely see the small but thoroughly disciplined and extremely active Communist organization step in and take charge of our affairs. In France the extreme left ruled for half a decade after the fall of the Capets, and in Russia the Communists took over the government almost imme-

diately after the fall of the Romanoffs; in neither case was there a sound or well-organized middle party ready to step into the breach. On the other hand, the moderate Social Democrats of Germany were able to stave off extremist rule there in 1919 following the collapse of the Empire by virtue of their long years of preparation.

We may never see a collapse or a revolution in this country, but I nevertheless feel that the conservatives are headed that way, as is indicated by their increasing greed, their tariff and monopoly grabbing, their Eighteenth Amendment, their wilful spoliation of the Bill of Rights, their imperialistic foreign policy, and, most significant, their complete confusion and inability to act in an economic crisis that has shaken the faith of many people in the usefulness and value of capitalism. But while they are daily revealing their multiplying weaknesses, and the working classes are increasingly interested in, if not yet definitely attracted by, the Communist experiment in Russia, our Liberals and Progressives are once more thinking and talking about chasing after that most futile of political fantasies—a third party—instead of getting down to earth and building a permanent party that will live through defeat as well as victory, and that will be fit to take over the government when victory comes.

AMERICANA

ALABAMA

PROGRESS of the Noble Experiment in the heart of the Bible country, as reported by the Samson *Ledger*:

Hard times, coupled with intense competition, are said to be responsible for a decided drop in the price of busthead. According to a man supposed to be well informed, "busthead" can now be procured at 49 cents a pint, instead of the usual dollar. The reduced price is reflected in a considerable increase in public drunkenness, quite a number of cases of this character having been reported lately.

A measly 25% profit is about all the distributors can glean off the bootlegging traffic at present. According to the *Ledger's* information, the distributors pay \$3 a gallon for the rum, which is manufactured, so it is alleged, not far from the town, and selling for 49 cents a pint brings in less than \$4 a gallon. This, most anyone will agree, is a very small margin of profit.

CALIFORNIA

WHY Iowans with rheumatism flock to California, as revealed by the advertising columns of the eminent *Nautilus Magazine*:

CHARLES M. BERKHEIMER, Metaphysician, Hotel Trinity, Los Angeles, Cal. Daily treatments, \$5 month; Special, \$10 month.

J. BENJAMIN HOBBS, Individual Treatments, Advice, Personal Problems. Voluntary offering. 1441 Lake Shore Avenue, Los Angeles, California.

Society For Healing The Sick By True Prayer. DELLA MARIE PENCE, Leader. 1941 Fresno St., Fresno, California. Treatments for health and prosperity. Free will offering plan.

GLORY GLADWIN, Heals through Divine Love. Interviews, Correspondence, 330¼

So. Vendome Street, Los Angeles, Cal. Telephone, Dunkirk 5306. Love offering.

EDISON HAND, Metaphysical Practitioner, 1020 Everett Ave., Oakland, California. Treatments. Letter assistance. Write or wire.

Treatments by Prayer. If sick or discouraged. Free Will Offering. ANNA L. STOECKLY, 514 Foothill Blvd., Oakland, California.

PROSPERITY and HAPPINESS treatments. Love offering only. Send 30c in stamps. A. M. ALCORN, 840 California St., San Francisco, Calif.

ELIZABETH CARRICK COOK, D.D., Ph.D. President N. California District I. N. T. A. Practitioner, daily treatments. Free Will Offering, 609 Sutter Street, San Francisco, California.

HATTIE CHAPMAN GIBBS, Health, Harmony, Prosperity treatments. 1216 Leavenworth, San Francisco, California. Voluntary Offering.

REV. GEO. C. GOLDEN, Metaphysician. Consultation letters, \$10.00. 68 Post St., San Francisco, California.

W. FREDERIC KEELER, Metaphysical Practitioner. Treatment by the Spirit. Twenty-five years in active practice. Wire emergencies, follow by letter. P. O. Box 1546, San Francisco, Calif.

THE AQUARIAN MINISTRY (Desk N), Santa Barbara, Calif., treatments for health, prosperity and adjustment. 25 years' experience. Free will offering. Cooperative treatments daily for two months \$3.00. Details on request.

Let me help you attain health, happiness and your desires. Free will offerings. VORA B. DURAND, Spring Valley, Calif.

THE American Civil Liberties Union on the life of free Americans in Los Angeles:

Wanton destruction of the Coöperative Center in Los Angeles by city policemen will be followed by a damage suit against