

# OUR NEXT PRESIDENT

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES — SELECTED BY FORUM READERS

*Cartoons by Oscar Cesare*

*THIS month brings forth the best Democratic papers submitted in THE FORUM's Presidential Contest, following the best Republican papers published last month.*

## PRIZE AWARD

*IN judging this contest the Editor has assumed the rôle of a citizen from Mars who, disregarding the realities and probabilities of American politics, is asked to choose Our Next President solely on the evidence submitted. Upon this basis the Editor is pleased to award the prize of one hundred dollars to Mr. John P. Bruton, whose paper, published in this issue, gives the most cogent reasons why Senator Walsh ought to be Our Next President — this in spite of the fact that he has withdrawn from the contest.*

## I — ALFRED E. SMITH

NORMAN HAPGOOD

**T**HE man with the highest individual chance of becoming our next President is Alfred E. Smith, four times Governor of New York. There is nobody in either party except Smith who is almost sure of the nomination. I think the big campaign money scandals are helping Hoover toward nomination, but his chance of getting it is much less than half that of Smith. If both are nominated, the odds on Hoover will be small.

No one has the audacity even to assert that any other Democrat has a reasonable prospect of shaking the grip of the Republicans. Why is it that Smith actually has a prospect? As many a hard-boiled Republican believes Smith is likely to win, there must be reasons.

People to-day vote mainly on business prospects. The farmer, the storekeeper, the investor, and the magnate have been brought up to believe that the prosperity of this virgin and mechanical continent is based on the wisdom of Mellon, Coolidge, and the combination of politics and big business. If unemployment is still evident when the voter goes into a booth with his God next November, it will not be quite easy to persuade him to select a President merely because he wears the label "Re-

publican," provided his alternative is the ablest business executive in the political history of New York.

Smith is not a theorist. He has fought many a good fight for liberalism, but his fighting has not been in the air. The few voters who care for freedom as it was visioned by Jefferson will remember what Smith did for sanity in such cases as Jim Larkin, Gitlow, and the Socialist Assemblymen. The few will think of the fact that his appointments to the Supreme Court will be made in the light of his agreement with Holmes and Brandeis in social outlook. Besides those who are philosophically for liberalism, there may be also the ranks of labor taking an interest in this outlook, as it sees the abuse of the injunction putting an unfair weapon into the hands of some of the most brutal capitalists. There is a good deal of talk nowadays about the help Smith receives from studious persons especially interested in social reform. It may be well not to forget that those groups, now his followers, went over to him thirteen years ago on his social and labor record already established in Albany.

I grow weary of hearing about what a good politician he is. In mere shrewdness

he is probably not superior to Big Bill Thompson, or perhaps even Governor Len Small—to take two ornaments from the commonwealth once graced by Abraham Lincoln. The difference is that those men appeal to the worst in the electorate, and Smith appeals to the best. The difference is that when he steps before the radio and invites men and women in their homes to think about the business that concerns them, he is delivering to them the soundest education ever sent out to the voters.

Many farmers find it impossible to think. Republican tradition is too strong for them. There will be other farmers—in Southern Illinois, Wisconsin, Nebraska, many places—who will be willing to listen to a man who in the eighth agricultural state of the union has unceasingly worked for better farm conditions, and who is a leader in the effort to keep water power where it can be used for the welfare of the farmer as well as of the city householder. A leader of the people needs both ability and heart. It is not easy at this day to doubt Smith's ability.

The most important single question in the world is peace among the nations. Another war could start civilization on the down grade. Smith loves people and hates waste. Since he is a builder, destruction to him is abhorrent. His diplomacy and tact are unsurpassed, and nobody has fooled him much. The voter is likely to believe that in the White House no other

would be more likely to find roads to harmony.

On the unhappy liquor predicament I would not argue with a voter who puts the question first and believes it should be settled by national force. True, Smith would use the enforcement money as well as Mellon, or better, but it is true also that the election will be interpreted as a referendum. So be it. It is important to decide whether Sweden and Canada are right in constant serious experiment, or whether we are right to freeze a majority decision into our Constitution. Probably he will gain more than he will lose, since there are signs of disillusion about the step we took when we abandoned the march of temperance through education and through the rising standard of living, and rushed over to the doctrine of fixity and force.

Religious bigotry it would do me no good to discuss. Jefferson had his authorship of a statute of religious freedom inscribed on his tomb. In spite of Kluxism, on the one hand, and the sacred gospel of Mellonism, on the other, circumstances are such that the most constructive liberal in America is likely to be the next President of the United States. The man who deserves that title is one who, by his own brains, courage, and morality, has marched from the swarming streets of poverty steadily up to a station of public confidence unexampled in a community of eleven million beings.

## II—THOMAS J. WALSH

JOHN P. BRUTON

**T**HOMAS J. WALSH of Montana will be nominated by the Democrats at Houston and elected in November. Voters are asking for a strong man. They feel they have too long been tolerant of ordinary ability in the management of national affairs. Only by placing the ablest in authority can they secure the highest order of government. Most Americans are inspired by the qualities of virility and independence. Walsh has these. He typifies the West.

Walsh is preëminently fitted to bring order out of the legislative and judiciary

chaos of our national life. A sane and faithful enforcement of present laws and a check on ill-considered legislation will follow his election. In the ability to interpret the Constitution he has no equal among the other candidates. Walsh's election to the Presidency will mean the greatest stimulus to law enforcement our nation has known since the World War.

Walsh has many times shown himself a master in stressful situations. He has made the investigation of the oil scandal the Walsh investigation. Despite the fact that the main action of the government



THOMAS J. WALSH  
SENATOR FROM MONTANA

has been to hinder and not to promote the inquiry, the people have given him general confidence. No one questions that the principals would have met deserved punishment and that the scandal would now be a closed incident if Walsh had been in charge of the department of justice.

Perhaps no one in American history ever had a more trying time as a presiding officer than Walsh as Chairman of the Democratic Convention in 1924. He was

the only member of the convention who did not make a mistake or a series of mistakes. Who else in the convention as delegate or candidate could the party be proud of?

Walsh as a candidate will be representative of true Democracy. All other candidates are considered because they advocate or represent some particular policy or "ism." No one makes as broad an appeal as Walsh. He has no political or sectional entanglements that would

keep him from being just to all. Nothing in his many years of public service calls for explanation or apology.

Walsh expresses the social ideals and political freedom that Jefferson made a part of our political thinking. He has the crusading zeal and fiery passion for justice and the welfare of the common people that made Jackson a national hero. He embodies the ideals and world statesmanship of Wilson. No other personality in our national life exemplifies such a heritage of the good as Walsh.

Walsh has shown a conception of international relations and needs that is rare among our public men. The day is here when we cannot be assured economic stability and progress by ignoring or antagonizing all influences beyond our borders. The American people want a peace programme that has some aim in view and that can present a plan comprehensible to the average citizen.

With Walsh in the White House farm relief will be taken out of the category of legislative jokes. His environment and mentality will give sympathetic aid to our basic industry. He knows that the tariff is now framed to make the farmer pay higher for what he must buy and to give him less market for what he sells. Walsh favors tariff reduction as necessary to farm relief. His position on the tariff is more clearly understood than that of

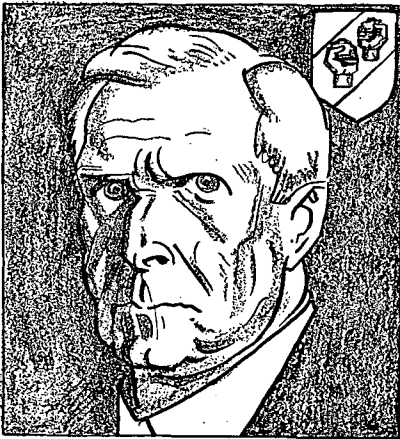
any other candidate, and he is not hampered by provincialism and prejudice.

Walsh's attitude on prohibition needs no questionnaire nor explanation from propagandists. The country, by constitutional process and legal enactment, declared itself dry, and he believes it means to be dry. His belief will govern his action as an executive and his devotion to the law of the land will give prohibition no place as an issue in the campaign.

Those who believe in the ideals and purposes of Woodrow Wilson find in Walsh their strongest champion. To him would go what is distinctly the Wilson vote—a vote that is eager to express itself at the polls. The vote that has little party fealty and the independent vote will be the deciding votes in the election. Both of these will give Walsh strong support.

Walsh's personality is his platform—a platform that speaks in definite terms, a platform not to be forgotten after the nominating convention nor purposely lost after the election. He will bring out the stay-at-home vote because his candidacy will make it worth while to vote. Because he has qualities that will rouse citizens out of their indifference, because he has the trust of the people, and because he meets the demands of an earnest electorate, he will be chosen the next President.

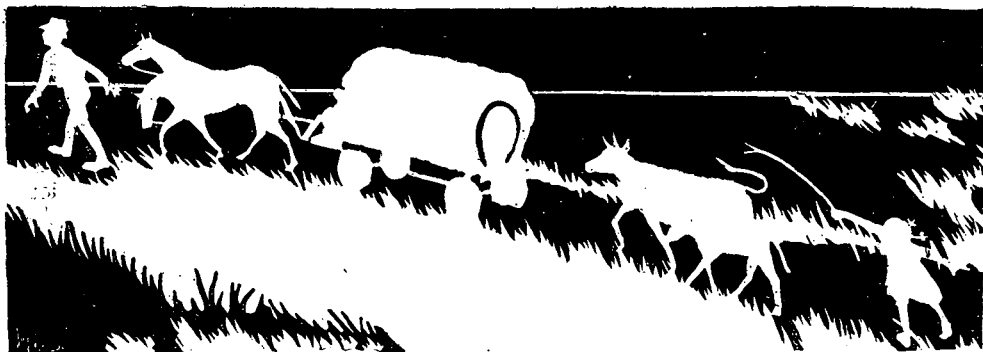
### DARK HORSES IN THE DEMOCRATIC PADDOCK



JAMES A. REED  
SENATOR FROM MISSOURI



ALBERT C. RITCHIE  
GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND



Scissor-cuts by Martha Bensley Bruère

## HILL COUNTRY

*Forum Prize Biographical Novel — V*

RAMSEY BENSON

**T**HE next issue of the *Gumbo Voice* let fall a bombshell in the enemy's camp. Because the name was likely to be as unfamiliar to his public as it had been to him, Sven began with a short history of the Bemidji & Grand Marais. There might be those in Gumbo who had heard of Bemidji, but these were few.

Some years earlier, when the lumbering industry in Minnesota was coming to the peak of its prosperity and discerning men engaged in it had begun to foresee its finish, a company of capitalists had undertaken to build a railroad that should tap and open up vast stretches of timber too far away from the logging streams to be handled in the old way. They called the railroad the Bemidji & Grand Marais, though these points were not necessarily the terminals. The project had everything to commend it, and there was no ground for doubting the good faith of the parties behind it.

They asked for a grant of public land in aid of their enterprise and there was nothing out of the way about that. The state at large was going to benefit by the opening up and development of its resources and by good rights it should pay part of the cost. The company acted in

good faith in asking for the grant, and the legislature in voting it acted wisely. So far, there was no fault to be found with anybody.

But the undertaking fell through. More detailed surveys demonstrated not only that the cost would be a good deal more than the company's first estimate, but that the timber wasn't worth as much as the early cruisers had reported—the upshot being that no railroad was built, the conditions of the charter were not met, and the grant of land was forfeited.

Very likely the history of the Bemidji & Grand Marais would have ended right there but for the subsequent discovery of iron, first in the Vermillion region, and shortly after in the Mesaba range. With that discovery the lands described in the B. & G. M. grant took on overnight a value that verged on the fabulous.

If the grant hadn't been forfeited, it would have meant untold millions in the pockets of the stockholders of the B. & G. M., their heirs and assigns. Nor was it any serious offset that title under the grant could be perfected only by building the railroad as originally projected, for now the land was worth enough to build a dozen railroads, regardless of obstacles.