

would have an indefinite number of blocs, and might presently see Congress going through the kaleidoscopic antics of the French Chamber of Deputies, with coalitions forming, dissolving, and exploding, and with all the interesting if insecure politics and ill-considered legislation inherent in the system.

This discussion, of course, is speculation based on nothing more than threats from Smith partisans, and the obvious facts of the situation. No Catholic leader will admit, for publication, that it is even yet worth serious consideration. But it is well within the bounds of possibility, and that fact alone, in a country which so far has succeeded in keeping its politics free from the destructive enmities of religious quarrels, is a serious matter.

The appearance of a Catholic party is only one of several kinds of explosion that may yet come from the folly of those who raised that issue in the Democratic National Convention of 1924. But it seems the most likely one. And of course, the party may — as it has done before — swallow its enmities undigested, cover its disagreements with sonorous platitudes, and stick together somehow. Whatever happens, the very fact that developments such as have been suggested lie not far below the surface of the coming campaign, will make it the most sensational and crucial since the Free Silver fight of 1896, and probably since the anti-slavery campaign of 1860.



## II — THE POPE AND A CATHOLIC PARTY

MICHAEL WILLIAMS

**M**R. STANLEY FROST'S notion that a Catholic party is likely to be a result of Governor Smith's candidacy for the Presidency is the second of two very curious ideas which the extraordinary political situation has so far brought to my attention. The first was conceived by a Baptist clergyman of North Carolina, who came to me a few weeks ago with a series of articles. In them he set forth his idea that he was but one of hundreds of Southern Baptists who were Democrats and drys, but who placed American principles above other con-

siderations in politics and, therefore, were ardently in favor of Smith for President, and totally opposed to anti-Catholicism in politics. The anti-Catholic issue, in his opinion, was largely a smoke-screen anyhow; being raised and manipulated by none other than wicked Wall Street, who recognized, as he and his Southern Baptist Democratic friends recognized (according to him!), that Governor Smith first and foremost was the heaven-sent leader of the plain people against the "Interests." Hence the "Interests" were out to down him before he could get started.

I consider Mr. Frost's idea even more fantastic than my Baptist friend's theory. Mr. Frost, however, is nationally known as a journalist, especially in connection with Ku Klux Klan affairs. His theory, unlike the Baptist clergyman's, has found publication, and in answer to THE FORUM's request for a brief reply to Mr. Frost's arguments, I offer the following remarks in support of my description of the idea as being merely a political grotesque.

First of all, I would say that his idea is purely personal; and that the "Catholic politicians" with whom Mr. Frost has discussed this pipe-dream no doubt had it brought to their attention first by Mr. Frost. I certainly cannot believe that Mr. Frost discovered the idea already existent as a political possibility and then went forth to its discussion. To me it has all the marks of one of those notions devised (by a futile Sunday special editor, let us say) to create interest, and which is then bolstered up by getting people to talk about it.

I think so because as editor of a journal owned, edited, mostly written, and for the most part read by Catholics — a journal which is non-political, numbering many prominent Republicans and Democrats among its supporters — I can testify that until Mr. Frost advanced the idea of a Catholic party as a result likely to be produced by the Smith candidacy, I had not heard a whisper of it. Not a single word. I have been in a good many parts of the country recently. I have heard from many other parts. Everywhere, of course, there is the liveliest interest displayed in Governor Smith. Catholics who are Democrats (but not dry) are for him. Catholics who are Republicans are not so much against him as against his party, and staunch for Republicanism and for — well, let us say for Hoover, or Mellon, or Hughes; some of them for Dawes, all of them for Mr. Coolidge, if they could get him. Catholic dries — not so many of *them*, but still a goodly number

— whether they are Republicans or Democrats are against the New York Governor.

But the opposition raised against Governor Smith simply because he is a Catholic offends all Catholics — Democrats or Republicans, wets or drys. Catholics feel about this as decent men might feel if all women before being married were required to hear the press, and the pulpits (not all pulpits, of course, but the sort of pulpit that goes in for that kind of pulpiteering) discuss the question whether women are by nature chaste, or will remain faithful to their husbands. In other words, American Catholics simply are disgusted by the anti-Catholic issue raised in politics, against Governor Smith, or anybody else. Fortunately, they know that few, indeed, of their non-Catholic friends and associates having reasonable claims to be considered representative Americans are mixed up in this sordid exhibition of utterly unreasonable prejudice, the product of provincial ignorance. And the last idea that would be entertained by responsible American Catholics would be to make of Governor Smith's candidacy the occasion for dragging their religion into the dusty, not to say miry, arena of party politics.

For the sake of the argument, however, let us assume that there may be some such Catholics as Mr. Frost thinks there are — Catholic politicians, who, either through intemperate resentment, or (which would be more probable) through purely political motives, are seeking to capitalize for their own advantage any general state of indignation among Catholics that might result from Governor Smith's defeat, either in the convention or the election. Would Mr. Frost's pipe-dream have any chance to come true?

In my opinion, it wouldn't have the ghost of a show to be realized.

First of all, because Catholics are the most difficult people imaginable to be organized or swayed as a mass, politically or socially. Catholicism seems to do something to men's minds which makes those minds highly individualistic and stubbornly averse to manipulation by psychological hokum or ballyhoo. It is hard, indeed, to organize Catholics and get them to unite for the most apparent of legitimate ends other than purely religious ones. I know that a contrary belief is held by many. Because of the impressive age and obvious efficiency of the church as an organization, many people think that Catholics are, of all

people, the most malleable and controllable of human material. I used to think so myself, before I became a Catholic.

I remember my amusement (and also my sympathetic understanding) at the time of the United War Fund Drive of the seven great welfare organizations. When the Catholics were linked up in this drive, rather late in the day, through the Knights of Columbus and the National Catholic Welfare Conference — the latter directly controlled by the American Bishops — my non-Catholic confreres on the various committees on which I served (representing the publicity interests of the Catholics) were most deeply impressed by the belief that the marvelous organization of the church would achieve untold wonders. Well, it was quite true that the church organization did function most efficiently so far as the main purpose of the drive was concerned. The Bishops of all the dioceses could and did get all their parish priests working at once, collecting funds, and providing members for all sorts of committees, speakers, etc. But the church organization was completely without that with which all the other organizations were most evidently well equipped, namely, publicity machinery.

The Knights of Columbus improvised a publicity bureau, which, because of the genius of a single individual — Mr. John B. Kennedy — accomplished wonders in putting the work of that society properly before the general public. The National Catholic Welfare Conference also had one man, in Washington, who handled the publicity as part of his general work of this kind. He himself was not a Catholic.

But when the war spirit died along with the War, and the National Catholic Welfare Conference tried to keep up its organization for social service work along the lines found so valuable during the War — what infinite difficulties were encountered! Even so obviously useful a work as the registration at headquarters of the names of all the Catholics who served in the War — a task which only the pastors could do — was never completely done. (It was done sufficiently well, however, to show beyond question that Catholic citizens had served their country in numbers far beyond those proportionate to the total population.)

Many people — probably Mr. Frost among them — seem to believe that all that has to be done to start a great movement among Catholics is for the Pope to push a button, which puts the Bishops at work; when they again push more buttons, communicating with their priests, these in turn pushing the final set which

starts the laity going in the desired direction. Those who believe thus would do well, sometime, to sit down with a Bishop or priest or layman who has tried to organize American Catholics for other than parish or diocesan purposes — for other than strictly religious work — and listen carefully to what they have to say. It might be useful to send their answers to Mr. Frost.

The formation of Catholic political parties in foreign countries, advanced by Mr. Frost as an argument in favor of the possibility of similar action in this country, has nothing to do with his case. Rather, it tells against it. Those foreign Catholic parties, certainly the German and the Italian parties, were formed for two reasons. First, in Germany, for the defense of interests vital to the existence of the Catholic Church, principally, the right to educate its children. Secondly, in the instance of the Popolare party in Italy — which strictly speaking was not a Catholic party at all, but an organization formed to advance great social interests, particularly coöperative agricultural movements — that was grounded upon principles derived from Catholic social philosophy. The French party was, so to speak, a hang-over of French monarchial ideas, and has been disowned by the church, so far as it rashly ventured to act as a Catholic party.

In fact, the central authority of the church consistently opposes the formation of Catholic political parties. Only the gravest of reasons, when vital principles are at stake, justifies such movements in the eyes of the church. No such reasons exist in the United States. If Governor Smith quite plainly and unmistakably should be denied a nomination by his party because sufficient numbers of that party are un-American enough to allow inherited and baseless anti-Catholic emotions to rule their political actions, such a state of affairs is something for Americans as Americans to deal with. It would not attack any basic principle of the Catholic Church. It would be an offense against justice, and a desertion of American political principles on the part of a certain number of Americans. But certainly the Catholic Church would neither direct, encourage, nor welcome the formation of a Catholic party to readjust this situation. It would be for the existing parties to thrash out the matter.

A Catholic who has served his country in many highly important positions of official trust and responsibility, said to me when discussing this matter: "I happen to be a Republican. So was my father, and also his father. Like a great many other Catholics to-

day, I am interested in the question as to whether a Catholic can be denied high office simply because he is a Catholic. Not because I am politically in favor of Governor Smith, nor because I am interested in seeing any Catholic elected President. But, like my fellow Catholics, I am wondering if Catholics — whether Republicans or Democrats — are hereafter to be forced to recognize that in the eyes of non-Catholics they are considered citizens of the second class."

But even if Catholics were placed in such a class, the formation of a political party to get them out of it would seem beautifully devised to keep them in it. So beautifully, so completely is it calculated for that end, indeed, that I cannot but go back to the thought with which I began, namely, that no Catholic ever started such an absurd idea. It was created by their enemies, or else (and more probably) is simply a pipe-dream of Mr. Stanley Frost.



### III — POLITICAL SUICIDE FOR A CATHOLIC PARTY

WILLIAM BENNETT MUNRO

**A**LMOST anything may come out of the impending presidential campaign; but the formation of a Catholic party is least among all the probabilities. We ought not to be misled by what has taken place in European countries, where the conditions are altogether different. The Centre party in Germany, the Action Libérale in France, and the Partito Popolare in Italy are all of them the outcome of Catholic resentment against oppressive and discriminatory laws affecting the church, its property, its hierarchy, and its economic freedom. They are the answer to anti-clericalism, the mechanism of self-defense against blocs of politicians who have sought to place the Catholic Church in vassalage to themselves.

But there is no basis for any such resentment, or need for self-defensive organization, in the United States. We have subjected the Catholic Church to no legal oppression or discrimination whatsoever. It has not had to fight a single skirmish in order to