

# Tom Dewey's Gilt-edged Glamour

Barbara Giles estimates the Republicans' leading candidate. "His speeches are older than Hoover's, at least as old as Harding's." Wall Street's boy of Owosso, Mich.

UNTIL a month or so ago many GOP leaders regarded Thomas E. Dewey as a precocious peewee with enough G-man glamour to rate him, possibly, a second place on the national ticket. Today they are yelling "Stop Dewey" almost as loudly as they cry "Beat FDR." Considering the current Republican demand for glamour, this is queer. To you and me Mr. Dewey may look as glamorous as Herbert Hoover in rompers, but not according to his front-page reputation, which is that of an American Dream hero. He is the smalltown boy who stormed the big-city ramparts of corruption, slew the giants of sin, and shamed the Whore of Babylon. He is, as you prefer, Dick Tracy, Mr. Deeds come to town, Saint George, or young Lochinvar out of Owosso, Mich. All America knows his Hollywood counterpart, the fearless young district attorney who, singlehanded, busts up the rackets and slings politicians behind bars. In addition to this, Mr. Dewey is young and handsome. What else does the party of Cal Coolidge want in the way of glamour? Indelible lipstick?

Why do so many Republican leaders want to stop him? Their aversion to the district attorney of New York has little to do with his public character. Some of it is based on the routine ambitions and jealousies of inner-party politics, more of it on a pure and potent dislike of the man Dewey. This last may come as a shock to radio listeners who have confused the boy cop with Knight Galahad, but it is a fact nevertheless and there are plenty of reasons for it. I shall deal with these later. The important thing at the moment is that Thomas E. Dewey has led the Republican presidential aspirants in the primaries held thus far, exhibiting a vote-getting ability that impresses and alarms his party enemies. His victory at the Philadelphia convention is by no means assured, of course. Ohio's Senator Taft has been quietly picking up delegates in the South, Michigan's Vandenberg is still in the running, while Wendell Willkie and even darker horses manage to raise considerable dust. Besides, a nag that runs so far in the lead at the beginning is sometimes pulled up short on the home stretch. But we must consider Mr. Dewey as he is at this writing, a very possible presidential candidate of one of the nation's two major political parties. As such what does he offer the American people for their votes? How does it differ from the wares of his Republican rivals or of FDR and other donkey-riders?

## BRIGHT BOY

The Horatio Alger chapters of Tom Dewey's career begin after his arrival in New York at the age of twenty-one. Before that

he was just a bright boy with a fine singing voice who had studied law at the University of Michigan and music in Chicago, and couldn't choose between the bar and the concert stage. For a time the latter won and he came to Manhattan for further voice instruction. But Dewey, as we shall see, was never a man to captain his soul without keeping simultaneous watch on all decks. He continued to study law, at Columbia, while preparing for a musical career, and soon after obtaining his LL.B. he was doing small but secure speaking parts in a Manhattan law firm. In just six years, marked by diligence and mounting income, he attained the position of chief assistant US attorney. Luck was largely responsible for the appointment. While working with Dewey on a law case, George Z. Medalie was made US attorney for the southern district of New York and he placed the twenty-nine-year old lawyer on his staff. When Medalie resigned in 1933, Dewey got his post, from which he himself resigned soon after in order to resume a private practice that brought him about \$50,000 in two years. From this lucrative if inconspicuous occupation he turned, after some persuasion, to the gang-busting career which opened in 1935 when Governor Lehman made him a special prosecutor commissioned to clean up the rackets. Within two years his conviction of underworld luminaries in poultry, trucking, restaurant, baking rackets, in policy games and prostitution, were making his name—to say nothing of his black mustache and bright eyes—known in newspapers outside New York. Mr. Dewey always got his man and moreover, he let it be known, he did it without resort to crudities like the third degree. There were other ways—not advertised—of obtaining confessions. Wiretapping was one, or grabbing smaller criminals and holding them in "protective arrest" under extraordinary bail until they spilled about the higher-ups.

Phony subpoenas, searches and seizures without warrant, excessive and unusual bail: these tactics may explain why Dewey does not risk paying the amount of lip service usually bestowed by candidates on "our sacred Constitution." But people knew much more about his results than his methods at that time. Anti-Tammany forces elected him district attorney in 1937; he threw "Lucky" Luciano in jail and tossed Richard Whitney in after him. The GOP ran him for governor in 1938 and Dewey, while not elected, got one of the largest Republican votes ever cast in a New York gubernatorial election. Young David returned to his slingshot and brought down Tammany Goliath Jimmy Hines, along with lesser grafters. Last fall he threw his crusader's halo in the ring.

Until he became a presidential aspirant Dewey had no overt opinions on national issues. He has them now, since any man who pays \$3,000 for a speech is surely entitled to the opinions in it. But before this he spoke or wrote nothing that deviated from his intense conviction that crime was deplorable and political corruption a sin. There is nothing on record to indicate that the candidate even wondered about the social roots of the rackets he was "smashing." Perhaps Mr. Dewey would have regarded such curiosity as too political, i.e., divorced from the pure civic virtue untainted by material elements on which his reputation rested. Since he bases so much of his electoral appeal on this virtue, let us see how non-political it is.

## TRESPASSING

Last September *Current History* reported that Dewey and his aides were possibly disturbed by the fact that "successful crime prosecution has ceased to be a Dewey monopoly, the federal government—and politics has been suspected—having entered the preserve." Now Roosevelt's administration has entered the "prosecution preserve" most conspicuously in Thurman Arnold's attack on labor unions through the Sherman act and in federal proceedings against Communists as typified by the Browder conviction. Mr. Dewey is not the only person to suspect politics here. What's more important (to him), he regards it as trespassing. So he is going after the labor unions and the Communists himself. Three days after the Browder conviction his office dusted off a three-year-old libel suit brought against the *Daily Worker* editor, Clarence Hathaway, by Mrs. Edith Liggett, widow of an anti-Farmer-Labor editor of Minnesota. A blue-ribbed jury, consisting largely of constituents from Dewey's assembly district, was selected to make conviction certain. Dewey's assistant, prosecutor Stichman, engaged in some libel himself, playing up the old "force and violence" gag about Communists. Meanwhile the Department of Justice scooped the young DA with another frameup, that of Ben Gold and other fur union leaders. Again Mr. Dewey countertrespassed. Last week his men marched into a convention of the Building Service Employees Union and disrupted the session by serving "show cause" orders on four union officials. The excuse was that these men were wanted for questioning in connection with the activities of George Scalise, former Building Service president, who had just been arrested for racketeering and extortion. Delegates who had welcomed the Scalise expose were infuriated by this follow-up publicity stunt on Dewey's part. At least one of the officials subpoenaed was noted for his opposition

to Scalise. The delegates themselves were deliberating ways of guarding their union against racketeers. But Mr. Dewey had to have his headlines. He had to show himself as good a union-buster as Arnold.

#### YEOMAN OF THE "NEW GUARD"

Dewey backers present him as a "new guard" Republican. The title has been claimed by others. Variations of it were first sprung in about 1930 when Republicans had to find a polite way of saying, "I'm not like Hoover." One of Dewey's rivals, Senator Vandenberg, led the "Young Turks," supposedly representing a form of new-guardism. Kenneth Simpson, New York Republican Committee chairman, heads a "liberal element" more frankly directed against Hoover. In Dewey's case the claim rests upon the assertion of his sponsors. When the daughter of Mark Hanna, the Republican boss of Nassau County (J. Russell Sprague), and men like John Foster Dulles, whose law firm occupies six floors at 48 Wall St., start rooting for a new guard candidate, we may be pardoned for staring. Nor has it strengthened their cause for George van Slyke of the New York *Sun* to write that Mr. Dewey must be a liberal since he is supported by "the leader of the liberal wing of the party," none other than Alf Landon. Disrespect for civil liberties, Red-baiting, and anti-unionism are not new among Republican, or Democratic, Party leaders. Which leaves Mr. Dewey with nothing novel but his eternal youth.

His speeches are older than Hoover's, at least as old as Harding's. Warren G. promised the people a rest from New Freedom. Dewey offers them a haven from New Dealism—that and literally nothing else. One of his advantages over Vandenberg and Taft is that his past record contains not a single positive proposal that might be used to embarrass him now. Even so, he has had one bad scare on the subject of peace. This past January the candidate was hinting that "we must search for the moment when we might, without entanglement, use our good offices to effect a genuine peace." He was thought to be influenced by Henry Stimson's leaning toward intervention. But in Wisconsin and Nebraska he found that a line like "We must stay out of war" got the biggest hand. Mr. Dewey thereupon switched to this line exclusively and Col. Breckinridge Long complained in a letter to the New York *Herald Tribune* that the candidate had been saying one thing in some cities and another in others. Since then Dewey has stuck to comparing America with a porcupine that minds its own business but is ready to defend itself if attacked. Let editors of opposition papers ask all the irritable questions they want about exactly where *does* this man stand on peace. Mr. Dewey will say nothing further about peace than that it's wonderful and you can't trust Democrats to keep it. Occasionally he warns that we in America must be free and strong ourselves in order to avoid the mess in Europe. That, however, is just by way of bestowing another



Charles Martin

*"If it wasn't for us guys—where would Dewey be today?"*

caress on his goddess Private Enterprise. In fairness to the candidate, it should be said that his party rivals are hardly more specific. In fact, if the Republican Party intends to offer a peace plank this year that will go beyond a platitude about "foreign entanglements," we have yet to be told what it is. Nor is it possible to imagine it. What peace program has the GOP ever offered? What peace program *can* a party representing the highest reaches of finance capital offer the people of America?

#### OLD HAT

As a campaigner Dewey has some cute tricks. One is the Peter Pan-Pollyanna act: Mr. Roosevelt is a tired old defeatist, who once said, "The economic machine is stalled on dead center." Give Tom Dewey the White House and American faith in individual enterprise will burgeon. Don't ask him exactly how this will come about. All he knows is what he reads in his speeches, and his speeches say that under the Roosevelt administration the country is practically going to hell in an express elevator. In fact you can learn some interesting truths from the candidate's perorations: that unemployment is increasing, the worker is getting kicked around, the farmers are economic stepchildren, and we are in danger of being involved in war. Mr. Dewey will even quote you John L. Lewis on these points. Maybe it isn't fair either to claim that the DA has absolutely no suggestions for improving things. It's only that the suggestions themselves say nothing. Some of them derive from Landon's generalities about protecting industry, putting the bureaucrat in his place, and the glories of mass production. Others are timid variations on the most popular New Deal policies, too vague to be analyzed. Young Tom's trumpeting of ancient Wall Street themes is loudest and most lusty when it comes to taxation and federal spending. Here

he really lets himself go and here he reveals the true Dewey conviction. It is—need I tell you?—that starvation is as nothing beside the anguish of a Morgan or Rockefeller with an "uncertain" business investment.

On other issues you can learn more about the candidate from what he does not say. As I have mentioned, it's risky business for the DA to talk about the Bill of Rights. Somebody in the audience might bring up his "singing schools," houses where Dewey is wont to keep witnesses (usually arrested without evidence) until they are persuaded, bribed, or alarmed into "singing" for him. Or a heckler might ask whether it's true, as Governor Lehman claims, that Dewey's friends in the state legislature killed the bills to outlaw wiretapping and unlawful search and seizure. In truth, G-man Dewey's methods are distinguished from G-man Hoover's by little more than unobtrusiveness and—for the present—political discretion. This extremely important fact is in the candidate's record.

He has said nothing that would encourage workers to suppose he favors collective bargaining. This business of quoting John L. Lewis to support his own attacks on Roosevelt is another of the Dewey cute tricks. It's a smart talking point and won't in the least disturb his financial chums, who know as well as the CIO chief that there isn't a crumb of agreement in Dewey's and Lewis' opposition to the administration. The candidate describes Lewis himself as a man who "put up half a million dollars out of union workers' dues to carry on those [New Deal] heresies." Organized labor, I suspect, is not so much interested in "heresies" as in knowing how far Mr. Dewey intends to go in competing with Thurman Arnold. It hardly has to ask him what he thinks of the Wagner act or the Wage-Hour law.

#### THE FARMERS

An entire Dewey speech is devoted to the farmers. Don't bother to read it. It says that the government won't let the poor farmer call his soul his own, that there are agricultural surpluses, and that industry should be stimulated so the farmer can buy lower-priced goods. It says (echoes of Hawley and Smoot) that agriculture "is entitled to" as much tariff protection as industry. On crop loans, soil conservation, and marketing agreements Mr. Dewey says he wants them—to what extent and through what devices he doesn't indicate. Crop loans, etc., cost money; how does Dewey harmonize this with his passion for less federal spending? The candidate admits with boyish frankness that he "knows no single scheme that will solve the farm problem overnight." But he has faith: "My faith lies in the 130,000,000 free Americans, free to produce, free to live and to go forward again to their own, their natural destiny." What does this lilting poppycock mean? That Dewey has exhausted the Coolidge quackery and has nothing else to give the farmers.

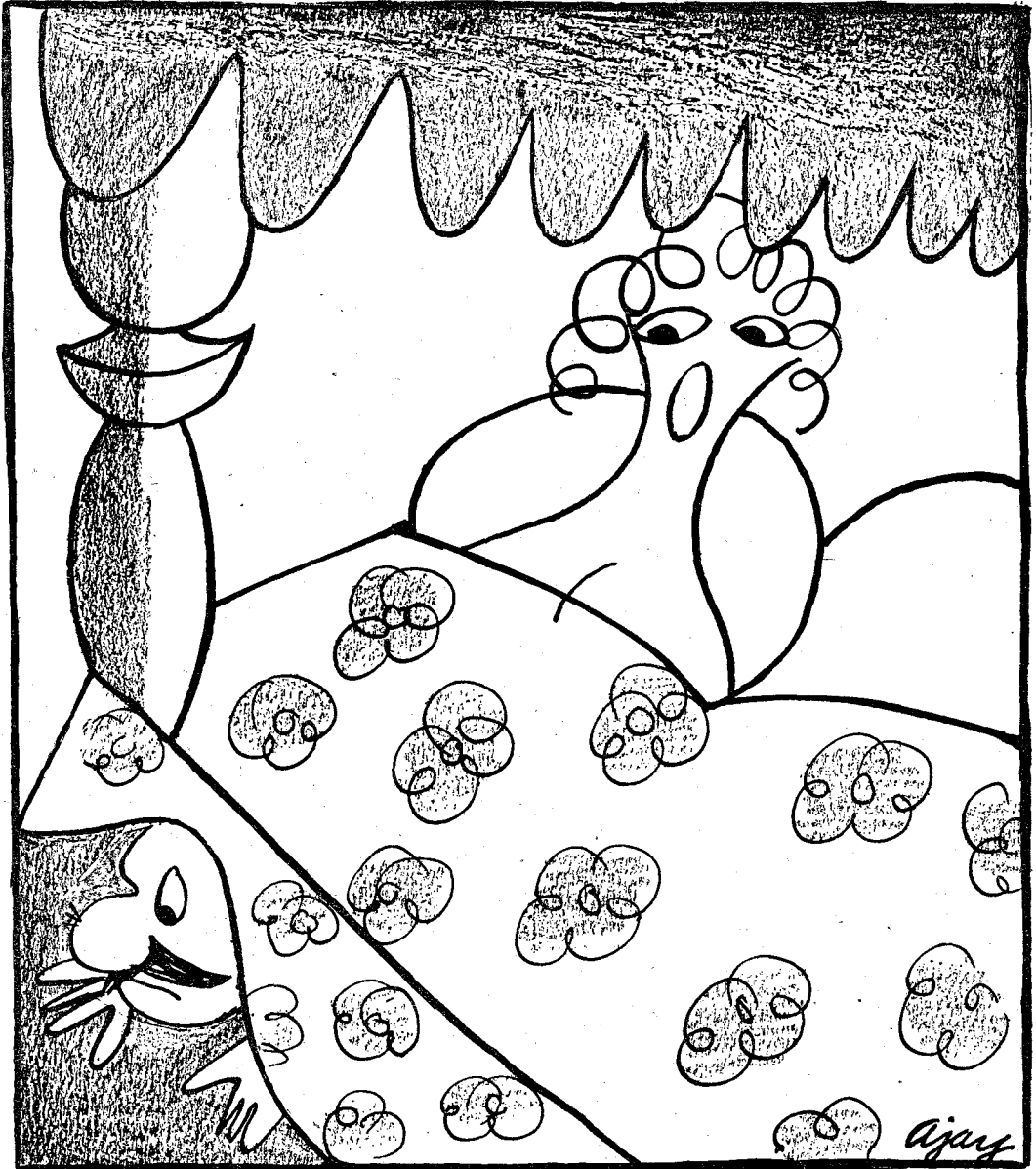
His "new guardism" is not even as daring as Glenn Frank's. The latter's proposed plat-



form for the Republican Party at least promised a national health program and extension of social security to farm laborers and domestic workers. But as a demagogue Dewey is slicker than Taft, cagier than Vandenberg. None of them, of course, can rival the performance of Franklin D. Roosevelt, by far the most graceful acrobat in the entire hippodrome of liberal pretenders. Dewey's chief talent lies in his evasiveness. He is particularly good at flashing before his audience a quick dazzling sketch of Tom Dewey in the White House, without ever letting anyone see the details. They can be filled in, however. We know in general who his backers are. Besides Dulles, Ruth Hanna McCormick Sims, and Sprague, they include: Artemus Gates, president of the New York Trust Co., who is related by marriage and financially to the House of Morgan; S. Sloan Colt, president of the Morgan-controlled Bankers Trust Co.; Charles Sisson, assistant attorney general under Hoover; and Roger W. Straus, an executive in the American Smelting & Refining Co. Undoubtedly other segments of Wall Street capital are represented in the collection box. Add to this factor in Dewey's candidacy his civil liberties record, his stuttering on peace, his adoration of Private Enterprise, and the picture becomes plainer. It is grotesque enough without his coltish capering. *This* is what the second largest political party in the country puts forth to charm the voters. This is one of the GOP's offerings in, of all years, 1940!

#### SOTTO VOCE

What does it matter that Dewey voices no program? Look again at his sponsors, listen to his silences. Evasiveness is more than talent here; it is a necessity. You cannot, you simply cannot say out loud to a people who demand something more than FDR, "Take Hooverism." The GOP elephant never forgets and it learns very little; but it does know now that the days of plainer speaking are over. Less than ten years ago David Reed of Pennsylvania could cry out on the Senate floor, "What we need is a Mussolini in the White House." A few years before that he could speak openly of his own constituents as "dunderheads." You would never have caught Reed or Joe Grundy or Boies Penrose wooing the electorate with Dewey's antics and rhetoric. The main outlines of their appeal were the same; it might be epitomized in the chamber of commerce slogan, "What's good for business is good for you." But they were franker in emphasizing the word business, less cautious about letting people know it meant the very biggest business. The idea then was that the workingman would be glad to help build industry's house of gold so long as he was permitted to come around to the kitchen and fill his dinner pail. Now, with nothing to put in the pail, Dewey and his friends proffer an ersatz of faith, youth, and the good old days. They still want a Mussolini in the White House. But it isn't possible to say so, and anyway they will have something not so different if voters can be persuaded that it isn't the same thing at all.



*"Oh, come on to bed, Archibald, and stop looking for the Fifth Columnn."*

Ajay

Republican voters haven't had a chance to see Dewey this way. His demagogy has the aid of a vigorous platform personality. He is young enough, and sufficiently theatrical, to lure people who are sick to death of the likes of sourpuss Hoover. His blitzkrieg attacks on the Roosevelt administration undoubtedly bring votes from people who haven't found an alternative to Dum and Dee. These qualities, unfortunately for Dewey, don't make him any more endearing to other Republican leaders. An acquaintance of his once made a remark about him that has been widely printed but deserves more circulation among the electorate: "It's almost impossible to dislike Tom Dewey until you know him well." Young Republicans, as much as their elders, detest his arrogance and bad temper, his prima donna conceit. Ladies who yearn over his handsome young face in the rotogravure do not know that Dewey once had a press photographer fired for taking a picture of him that hadn't been carefully posed first. Newspapermen resent his cockiness and the censorship he imposes on his office, by which no one but Mr. Dewey talks to the press and that when he

pleases. He is humorless, dictatorial, and ungrateful.

These things, as well as their own dislike of Dewey, may make GOP strategists dubious of him as a candidate. After all, there's more to a national campaign than one-night appearances on a platform; closeups are demanded. Besides, some Republicans regard young Tom as unsafe, not because of his political views (which are as sound as Andrew Mellon's), but his immaturity in national politics. On the whole they would prefer Vandenberg or Taft, though of course if Dewey is chosen they will take him—and like him. What they do get may depend on the will of Joe Pew, multi-millionaire oil man of Pennsylvania, who controls the state's delegates to the nominating convention and will be a central figure in any backroom conference. A number of dark horses have been suggested as likely winners. However, Vandenberg and Taft, in that order, are still Dewey's nearest contenders. In a subsequent article I shall discuss these two aspirants, the place each occupies in Republican politics, and what his election would mean to America.

BARBARA GILES.

# But a Million Didn't Vote

What happened in the California primary. More than 50 percent failed to cast their ballot. Al Richmond tells why.

San Francisco.

**T**HE California presidential primary election has been headlined in the nation's press as a landslide for Roosevelt. It was that. Political commentators went further; they interpreted the results to mean the President can have the Democratic nomination "on a silver platter—if he wants it" (the latter phrase is gratuitous delicacy). Generally, the close to three-to-one edge the Roosevelt ticket had over three rival slates was judged the biggest feather yet in the cap of the "draft Roosevelt" movement.

## THE VOTE

The vote, in round numbers, was: Olson-Roosevelt ticket 750,000, Garner ticket 125,000, Ham and Eggs ninety thousand, Patterson anti-war slate fifty thousand. Roosevelt leaders were jubilant. Governor Olson, distressed by a recall movement, harassed by a contemptuous "right" opposition, and bitterly despised by the left support he had betrayed, advised his critics they "should now be silent. . . . And with that silence," he added, "they should also bow to the will of the majority . . . and support their party leaders. . . ." Garnerites were jubilant, too. William R. Wallace, Jr., Garner boss in San Francisco, commented, "The vote for Franklin Delano Roosevelt testifies to a faith in a united continuation of real Democratic Party principles." Ham and Eggs leader Willis Allen shrugged, congratulated the President "on this great demonstration of his personal popularity in California. . . . The Ham and Eggs' only objective was to write a money reform plank into the platform," he added.

Lieut. Gov. Ellis E. Patterson, leader of the progressive peace slate, struck the only original note:

Despite our defeat we want to keep alive the issues we ran on. Foremost of those issues was our insistence that we keep out of war. I attribute the great success of the Roosevelt slate to the glamorous name of Roosevelt. Few people realize how he has turned against some of the fundamental elements of the New Deal, but in time they will learn.

The more than a million registered Democrats who did not vote, despite the four-way contest which had been expected to draw a sizable majority to the polls, were not quoted at all. Labor's Non-Partisan League, which dubbed the elections "a problem in confusion," presumed to speak for the silent vote, saying: "The light vote indicated a confusion and mental doubt which caused many, particularly in labor, to refrain from voting at all."

Were one to be content with surface judgment, oblivious of the fact that political re-

alignments in America are in a state of transition, the most obvious implications noted by political commentators would tell the story. But below the surface tide there was an undertow, weak as yet but potentially a decisive factor in shaping America's future. Progressive supporters of the Patterson anti-war slate, disappointed at their small vote, regarded it as the price of pioneering.

Considering that the political current which the Patterson slate represented (the progressive movement toward a peace party) was making its first open challenge against the Roosevelt camp under the most disadvantageous circumstances, the fifty thousand votes it received are the conscious nucleus for the new movement, rather than a gauge of its mass potential. The contest was a primary, supposedly designed to express a preference for presidential nominees. The Patterson slate, having no nominee to offer, was compelled to make its appeal without any mass leader to dramatize it. From the viewpoint of practical politics this was a great handicap and undoubtedly many of the million voters who could not be drawn to the polls by the "glamorous Roosevelt name" would have voted had the Patterson platform also been represented by an alternate candidate.

## LATE ENTRY

Further, the progressive slate entered the contest very late and not until three weeks before the election did it begin to overcome its initial vacillations on program and on bold opposition to the Roosevelt pro-war policy. Even then, despite the decisions made at the Fresno conference (reported in the April 30 issue of *NEW MASSES*) to challenge Roosevelt and support the Patterson slate, some of the leaders continued to follow a policy of compromise.

A typical incident occurred in a large CIO local in San Francisco. Leaders of the union had attended the Fresno conference and concurred in its decisions. Upon their return to San Francisco, they decided to report on the conference to the local membership. But they agreed to limit it to an "informative report," without asking for an endorsement of the conference program or the Patterson ticket, fearing that they would suffer a defeat if they attempted to buck the Roosevelt sentiment. One of the leaders reported and sat down. However, a rank and file member arose and moved that the union endorse the Patterson ticket. After thorough discussion, the motion was carried by an overwhelming vote.

The policy of compromise, illustrated by the leaders in this instance, was very costly, for the very nature of the campaign required a bold strategy. Some elements are now para-

phrasing that ancient cry, "They should not have resorted to arms!" to justify their own vacillation and to prove that it was unwise to challenge Roosevelt. However, in so far as a check can be made, this does not represent any substantial opinion in the progressive camp. Another factor hampering the progressives was lack of organization and money, both of which militated against the development of a mass campaign.

## FUTURE TACTICS

Attention will now be centered on the coming political wars in the August primaries and the November elections. Progressive strategy, profiting from the experiences of the primaries, will concentrate on two immediate objectives: (1) reestablishment of unity with the Ham and Eggs movement; (2) involvement of larger sections of the AFL in the peace movement. These are tactical questions. The broader political problems are: how to channelize existing anti-war sentiment; how to decrease the "glamour" of the Roosevelt name in some proportion to the shift in the policies for which it stands.

A start, at any rate, has been made in this direction and that is most important. The break with Roosevelt has been made; a skeleton organization has been established comprising a coalition much stronger than was indicated by the primary vote. The primary was a primary in the literal sense of the word; the finals are yet to come.

AL RICHMOND.

## M-Day in General Motors

**G**ENERAL MOTORS has posted bulletins in its East Bay (California) plants warning workers that they are subject to discharge for advocating "subversive doctrines." When a grievance committee in one of the plants protested to Superintendent Brown that the ruling looked like part of a plan to take them into war, Brown retorted, "You're God damned right it is," and added, "We're going into this war on the side of England." Vern Smith of the *People's World*, who uncovered the story for his paper, reports that the superintendent also told the workers, "The best thing you can do is to keep your God damned mouths shut." The committee then went to F. Fitzpatrick, general manager of all East Bay Chevrolet plants, who told them: "The plant is company property, and when you're on it you do and you talk as we say, or we'll run you—out of here. This plant for the company is just like your home for you. If anybody says anything you don't like, you kick his—through the door."