

sive, more grasping of power and more intolerant of opposition than at any time since the days of McKinley and Hanna. Its aggrandizement has finally aroused the opposition of classes in the community such as the wage-earners and farmers, who consider their own future security threatened by its physical and moral aggressiveness. The opposition is still confused, chaotic, and only partly articulate, but it is developing the quality of a genuinely popular movement and revolt which is building better than it knows. Its immediate embodiment is the candidacy of Robert La Follette for the Presidency, behind which there is forming an increasing conscious collection of groups which may eventually become a national progressive party. But this emerging party is not, like the old Socialist party, the product of an aggressive propaganda. It has come into existence, as did the Republican party, in order to resist aggression; and it will continue to resist until the economic interest responsible for the increasing class conflict is checked by the organized power of other economic groups and balanced and informed by the more humanely educated national consciousness of the American people.

In waging this contest the Republicans will represent the vested interests, and the acquired momentum of existing economic practices. They will, of course, claim that the effort of their adversaries to resist the class aggression which these economic activities as now carried on involve, is dangerous to the safety of American institutions and to the very existence of the American nation. This is the classic and practically the inevitable argument of all conservatives who are defending partly obsolete and excessively privileged institutions or activities. Progressives should respect the argument. It undoubtedly is a dangerous business to modify the operation of even partly obsolete institutions and activities, and the job cannot be undertaken too circumspectly and knowingly. But it is difficult to respect the argument as it is emitted by the Republican candidate for Vice-President. Mr. Dawes has never had the brains and patience to consider seriously what the attitude of his adversaries actually is, and what are the relative strength and weakness of the different parts of the line which he is obliged to defend. His attack on the Progressives and his defense of standpattism are merely the fulminations of an ignorant and foolish man. They sound like the ranting of an English Tory squire of 1830. His first important public speech proves Mr. Dawes to be really a terrible duffer. In it he started the campaign with a perfectly sound strategic plan which he was probably coached to adopt, but he handled his argument so violently and clumsily that he did his own party more harm than good. The Republican National Committee would do well quickly to place Mr. Hughes, Mr. Hoover and a few of their best minds on the stump for the purpose of correcting the effect of the fulminations of their vice-presidential candidate.

Summer Scholars

WITH the first cool breaths of autumn across the hillsides comes the end for another year of an annual American institution, unique and characteristic. Throughout the drowsy July and August days when mental activity is supposedly at lowest ebb, many thousands of men and women, sometimes young but oftener old, have been indulging in a sort of intellectual joy ride, a debauch of the brain, in scores of summer schools, conferences and camps. During these months it is impossible to go far, particularly in the northeastern quarter of the United States, without running upon some such mental potlatch, on mountainside or seashore, where an assorted group of auditors has come together to listen to lectures, participate in round tables, confer with "leaders" and gather mental stimulation which shall carry the members through another eleven months of not too exciting existence.

Such gatherings range in size all the way from the mammoth three-ring circus at Lake Chautauqua down to affairs which, were it not for the imposing titles on their letterheads, could hardly be differentiated from a somewhat protracted house party; and in prestige, from the Institute of Politics at Williamstown, described by Mr. C. E. Ayres elsewhere in this issue, with its collection of distinguished European diplomats, down to the conference of Sunday school teachers from the Second Methodist Church of Oak Bluffs, which is addressed by their pastor and by the superintendent from the Sunday School of the First Methodist Church. Some of these midsummer gatherings seek to make the world safe for Christianity; others, safe from it. If you know the ropes, you may spend your summer at sessions dedicated to forwarding or blocking almost any social or economic theory; or you may shiver in the rarefied atmosphere of a search for abstract truth in which, you are assured, the searchers start encumbered by no spiritual baggage whatsoever.

Why do the thousands come to these meetings, in numbers which increase from year to year with a speed like the growth of tropical jungle plants? Partly, perhaps, because one must go somewhere on one's vacation, the meetings are held in attractive localities, and lecture and conference constitute an addition to the possible list of Things to Do. For large quantities of communicants, of course, professional advancement is aided by attendance: the Y. M. C. A. or Y. W. C. A. worker who omitted to attend the annual gathering of the tribe would feel somewhat out of things thereafter. But no such utilitarian motive mars the loyalty of the great mass of those who gather, in tent or roughly built tabernacle, to hear Professor Squibb's lecture on "International Relations," or Professor Squiddle's report (with stereoptican slides) on "Chief Artists of the Italian Renaissance."

Theirs is the spirit in which ten million of their

brothers and sisters visit the tents of the travelling Chautauqua; the spirit which each winter plows faithfully through the course of study laid out by the local Woman's Club; the spirit which causes this country to buy in endless quantities Wells's Outline of History for themselves, and children's encyclopedias for their offspring. It is in the main an amiable desire to progress socially and intellectually; to fill up the interstices in an education whose defects are all too painfully apparent. It is part of the same general complex of emotions which makes one wish to be a good parent and citizen. Though it may be and often is accompanied by rigid conservatism in the fields of politics and morals, it is also likely to be humanitarian and liberal toward problems so remote that a dispassionate attitude is possible. The summer conference audience, taken as a whole, is in favor of the League of Nations. It wants somebody to abolish war (though it was rigidly patriotic in 1917-18). It is opposed to child labor, believes in prohibition, is worried about the wildness of youth, and thinks the writings of Dr. Henry Van Dyke are perfectly beautiful. Speaking in general, it is magnificently ignorant of economics, of history, and of the pressing national necessities which underlie present European and Asiatic politics.

Probably but a small part of the mass of fact and falsehood with which this audience is stuffed each summer is ever reflected in any subsequent conduct. Most of it goes in one ear and out the other, pausing only long enough to provide material for a dinner conversation or two. To generalize on this point, however, is somewhat dangerous. Everyone knows that the Protestant churches of America have lately been developing remarkable liberalism, exerted effectively on a national scale through various boards and councils. There is good reason to believe that the outlook on life which is implicit in this liberalism is developed and perhaps sometimes originated in the sort of gathering of which the summer conference is typical. It is also demonstrable that here and there an individual goes forward a little faster because of the impetus derived from contact with a vigorous "platform personality." Every summer lecturer worth his salt leaves behind him a chain of readers for hitherto unknown books and periodicals recommended by him.

We may face the matter still more pragmatically and ask, what would all these thousands be doing with their time if they were not listening to "The Unrest in the Mohammedan World," or "Main Currents in Nineteenth Century Literature." Perhaps playing golf (though the stratum which goes in for sports and that which listens to lectures barely overlap at present); but more probably doing deadly battle in the armchair armada on the front porch.

Intellectual activity need not be of a high order to be preferable to the vacuous vacation which for the average American of the type we are discussing is the alternative to the summer conference.

Electioneering on the Air

BY an accident of fate the radio has become a political fact of the first importance. It received its baptism at the national conventions. The chance that rules these things brought it to pass that the year of a uniquely confused presidential election should also be the year of greatest expansion of a new form of amusement. During the past twelve months millions of people have been putting on the head phones in the first flush of curiosity. To supply the demand of the listeners scores of broadcasting stations have sprung up and have drawn upon every conceivable form of audible entertainment and instruction for their meat. What more natural than that the microphones should be installed in the convention halls and the public at large invited to attend the deliberations of their parties? The whole thing was carried through in the spirit of curiosity on the part of the public and of naive business enterprise on the part of the radio companies which did the broadcasting. The politicians seem hardly to have been conscious of what was happening.

But the result was one to dismay the most hardened political cynic. The public did listen in, most extensively. Furthermore it was fascinated, horrified, and finally amused. The abysmal emptiness of the nominating speeches seems to have been amplified, in transmission, beyond the endurance of human ears. Used to a rapid change of auditory diet, the listeners turned off their batteries against the flood of hour after hour of inanity. During the long days of polling, at Madison Square Garden, the monotonous recurrence of "Alabama votes twenty-four votes for Oscar W. Underwood" became a matter for nation-wide jest. Friends would gather, tune in with the convention, receive a recurring wave of weary and obstinate balloting and tune out again with obscene execrations. The profane and exasperated asides of party managers whispered broadcast to a million auditors became the sensation of the moment in the radio world. In short, it was a moment of twilight in the political Valhallas. Thus "politics by radio" began in curiosity and ended in disillusionment.

The psychology of radio disillusionment is perfectly simple. The radio listener is free of the two most powerful compulsions of the crowd, emotional contagion and mass disapproval. Sitting all alone in his own den with his feet on the lounge and his pipe in his mouth, the radio fan is in the least propitious mood possible for the reflection of the emotions of perfervid oratory. What would go down in a close hall draped with flags and packed with a rustling multitude ready to give tongue on the slightest provocation if only to relieve its own pent up nervous tension falls as flat as a late breakfast in the solitude of the headphones. The debunking of environmental influence is complete. Furthermore the radio public is under no restraint. In the hall itself one may feel a difference of opinion but one