

Democracy and the Broken South

BY STRUTHERS BURT

Seeing the loss of the Solid South as good riddance, Mr. Burt hopes for a new Democratic Party to be rooted in Northern and Western liberalism

ON THE sixth of November, 1928, for the first time since the Reconstruction days of 1876, four Southern States, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Texas, voted the Republican National ticket. While they were doing this, the uncertain but by tradition Southern and Democratic Border States of Tennessee and Kentucky were also joining the landslide, the first, and the more Southern and Democratic, by a majority of about 38,000, the second by the enormous majority of 184,320.

The following day the statue of Thomas Jefferson on the campus of the University of Virginia was found draped in black, with this placard attached to its neck: "Sacred to the memory of Jeffersonian Democracy and religious tolerance. Deceased, November 6, 1928;" and within a week, the Senate of Mississippi, a State which with Spartan regularity had returned a Democratic majority of seventy thousand, issued two bitterly facetious bulletins: one inviting the defeated Democratic nominee to live where "Democracy still flourished", the other calling upon the sister State of Virginia to surrender

the sacred bodies of Jefferson, Jackson and Lee. Not long after this, the University of North Carolina played a game of football with the University of South Carolina, and numerous unreconstructed alumni of the former, fortified by those liquids the Southern political leaders have politically but not actually abolished, travelled up to Chapel Hill and, sitting on the South Carolina side of the field, repeatedly begged the young gentlemen from the still loyal State to "lick those damned Republicans".

THERE is nothing quite so dead as a political campaign, once it is finished. For the most part the country, outside of the South, has half forgotten how Virginia, North Carolina, Florida and Texas voted, and of those who vividly remember, only the few deeply interested in politics still retain any curiosity as to the causes that made those States vote as they did. Those causes, however, are of vital interest; not as history, but as indications of what we may expect in the future.

What is the future of the Republican party, and of the Democratic party? And is there any hope for a third

party? And if there is no hope for the last much needed consummation, what is the Democratic party going to do with the great and increasing Liberal vote that at the last election either joined the Democratic ranks or else, without enthusiasm, voted for Mr. Hoover? Until the Democratic party absorbs and settles this question of the South, it will settle nothing.

TAKE myself, for example. For some time now I have lost all curiosity concerning the Republican party, and every trace of eagerness in its behalf. I think I have that party pretty well charted, and in any position which it may assume, until it dies of over-eating, I see within it no chance of any forward-looking political philosophy. I have definitely left the Republican party, unless it experiences a miraculous change of heart. But, on the other hand, and especially since the last election, I am not enraptured by the Democratic party, to which I seceded. I see nothing in it to retain the loyalty of the liberal and discontented voter, who, just at present, is the most important voter in the country. In the last campaign there must have been at least five million such who voted the Democratic ticket, and two million or more who voted the Republican ticket. Within four years this bloc of votes, without any leader or any satisfactory outlet, will be enormously increased. What is going to happen to it? Just at present the liberal and discontented voter resembles nothing quite so much as a shot-gun bride, all dressed up, waiting for a bridegroom who has no intention of appearing.

That part of this vote which joined the Democratic party at the last

election, and, incidentally, gave it practically all of its impetus, courage and fighting qualities, has been bitterly disappointed. It is more than disappointed; it feels that it has been stabbed in the back by that very section of the country upon which it had the right most to depend. Leaving the well ordered if disingenuous fold of the Republicans, it suddenly became whelmed in the lack of cohesion, the local jealousies, the utter stupidity of the Democrats. And since the election it has witnessed even more lack of cohesion, even greater stupidity. It can perceive no intelligent intention on the part of the Democratic party to hold or capitalize the growing power that only a few months ago this party possessed. It hears nothing but conflicting counsels and hostile opinions. Only the still small voice of Mr. Raskob, detested in the South, the editorials in *The New York World*, and the occasional utterances of Governor Smith, bear the slightest relation to common sense or an appreciation of the situation.

WHY did the South break? We have heard two leading replies: First, Prohibition; second, Intolerance. Very simple, but not true. If either one of these causes, or both combined, broke the South, then this present discussion would have extremely little import and the future of the Democratic party and of those liberal and discontented voters who, lacking any other place to go, would like to remain Democrats, would be much rosier. The Solid South, given the slightest encouragement, would reconstruct itself; the "erring brothers and sisters" would return, as, in their almost incredible state of obfusca-

tion, the old-line leaders in the South firmly believe they will. They forget that flesh-pots, once tasted, have their recurrent charms.

Had it been merely Prohibition and Intolerance that broke the South, all that the Democratic party would have to do at the next campaign, to make at least a good fight, would be to nominate a Protestant Liberal candidate with sufficient reserve to equivocate on the question of Prohibition; with sufficient facial control to frown in the South and Middle West and smile and wink in the East and North. But those who believe that Prohibition broke the South are either ignorant of Southern conditions, or else deliberately self-blinded, as are the dry Southern political leaders. The same is true of Intolerance. Undoubtedly it decided a number of Southern votes; undoubtedly Prohibition decided a smaller number. Thousands of Southern women, led by their militant parsons, marched to the polls and did battle for *aqua pura* and the Protestant Popes of the Evangelical sects. Also, undoubtedly, there were many features of the Southern campaign so disgusting that the good Republicans in the North would not believe them if they were told. But the majority of these marching women would not have marched unless their husbands had permitted them, and while they were marching, their husbands, for the most part, were voting for Hoover and prosperity.

THE State of North Carolina has been on the edge of breaking for years. So, too, in a lesser degree, have been the States of Virginia and Florida. North Carolina has been re-

garded for a long while now by the Republican party as the keystone State for the breaking of the South, and rumor claims that during the last campaign that party poured hundreds of thousands of dollars into it. Certainly it is odd how closely allied most of the North Carolinian anti-Smith leaders are to big business. Much of the South was ready for a break, and the nomination of a wet Roman Catholic candidate merely furnished an excuse to overcome traditional prejudice and the horror of neighbors.

Furthermore, the South is broken for good. It will not again solidly vote the Democratic ticket until, under Republican administration, there is a serious financial depression, and then it will vote Democratic as will all the rest of the country, and for the same reasons.

THE real causes of the breaking of the South are shown by the statistics of the last election; which few people have taken the trouble to study. Statistics, I am well aware, are extremely fallible, but not when they repeat themselves with a curious insistency. It was the large cities and the more advanced counties and sections that defeated Governor Smith, not the traditional, Protestant, dry South. This holds true for every State. As we have seen, it was the more liberal and advanced States that voted the Republican ticket, and even among those States that remained loyal, the two most liberal and advanced, Georgia and Alabama, gave Smith such small majorities that they could hardly be called loyal. Among the cities only New Orleans gave Smith an impressive majority and,

discounting the large Catholic vote there, New Orleans is such a cosmopolitan city and so old, that the social upheaval which has formed the New South cannot shake its traditional poise or intelligence.

THERE are fascinating sidelights on this study of Southern statistics. For instance, it was the eastern, Protestant, dry counties of North Carolina that voted for Governor Smith, and the wet, liberal central and western counties that voted for Mr. Hoover. Norfolk, usually considered the wettest and most liberal spot in Virginia, gave Hoover a majority of 2,504; Richmond, less wet and less liberal, Hoover a majority of 554. In Georgia, Talbot County, persistently dry and reported to have not one Roman Catholic, voted 536 for Smith and 74 for Hoover. Such instances, taken at random, were repeated throughout the length and breadth of the South. They can have only one meaning. They mean that the tradition which has kept the South Democratic has entirely broken down under the onslaught, within the past ten years, of good roads, prosperity, travel, and, above all, the rise of an entirely new wealthy class; a class that is recruited either from Northerners who have emigrated or from Southerners who have not one bit of Southern tradition in their blood; who, in fact, are hostile to Southern tradition. It is Reconstruction over again, with the Carpetbaggers this time wearing golf clothes, driving about in high-powered cars, and patronizing country clubs. And it is a process that is spreading. In four years there will be even less of the Old South left. The statistics of the

last election are perpetually strengthened by incident and observation; their message is clearly understood by the majority of intelligent Southern students of social and political conditions.

IT is necessary, however, to go on. Merely to say that it was the more liberal and advanced sections of the South which voted the Republican ticket is misleading. Perhaps I have already hinted that there is Liberalism and Liberalism. There is real Liberalism, and the Liberalism of the road sign, the country club and the stock market. Prosperity is new to the South. It is a matter of the last decade. We must not entirely blame the South if it is now revelling in that unaccustomed prosperity with the usual unpleasant results which sudden prosperity brings. The process is inevitable. It is unavoidable evolution. But, since the old, and in many ways liberal and charming, tradition is gone, it is a delusion to hope for any real new Liberalism or charm in the South for at least twenty-five years to come. Certain members of the rising generation may exhibit real Liberalism, real charm. The placard on the neck of the statue of Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia is encouraging. In the last campaign it was clearly apparent that the Southern Democratic vote was a coalition of what is left of the Southern aristocracy, of the ignorant and blindly prejudiced Democrat vote, and of very young people, the last moved by reasons that the two former classes would not in the least understand. But there are not enough, as yet, of these young people. It will take another generation for the "awakened" South to reach

that state of calmness under prosperity now attained by the Middle West, or that long accustomedness to prosperity that every now and then induces the Northerner to risk even financial gain for the sake of a cause.

THE present-day Republican voter in the South — actual Republican or anti-Smith Democrat — is at the very lowest rung of Republicanism. He is in the General Grant, antimacassar state of Republicanism. It will take him decades to climb to the position of such liberal Republicans as Nicholas Murray Butler, or even Mr. Hoover. Just now the South is acutely, if unconsciously, non-Democratic both in the philosophical and political sense of the word, and all the Southern accent in the world will not change the situation. The South has found a new pocketbook, and it is new pocketbooks that make new Republicans. In all its future calculations the Democratic party throughout the country must take this fact into consideration unless it wishes to continue to advance upon disaster after disaster.

The Southern Democrats have always exerted far more influence in their party than their numbers or intelligence warranted. There are always those fatal one hundred and fourteen Electoral votes, but even they should not be great enough to complicate and ruin the future of a party which at the last election received twelve million, nine hundred and seventy-five thousand votes from the rest of the country and just two million and twenty-six thousand votes from its Southern supporters. Even in the campaign of 1924, where the popular vote for Mr. Davis was 8,386,503, the South contributed less

than twenty-five per cent. In the last campaign it contributed less than one-seventh of the total popular vote. In 1924 it gave Mr. Coolidge one million, three hundred thousand votes; in 1928, Mr. Hoover two million two hundred thousand votes. But, in the last campaign, outside of the huge popular vote the Democratic party received in the North, there was another encouraging feature, and that was that the Northern wing of the Democratic party seized power and held it. And that is where the control must remain if the Democratic party, save in crises and through the misfortunes of their opponents, is ever again to win a national victory.

BEFORE the Democratic party, two roads are open. It can either choose to remain a purely local party, winning local victories, and resembling, by being all things to all men in all sections, nothing quite so much as its bitter enemy the Ku Klux Klan; or it can become again a real party, which at present it is not. In order, however, to become the latter it must adopt a definite programme and that programme must be Liberal. There is no room for another Conservative party. There are enough Republicans as it is. As a Conservative party the Democratic party can appeal only to those who are born Democrats, and in the mysterious processes of political inheritance it would seem that, whenever twins are born, at least three of them are Republicans. The world is definitely divided into liberal minded and conservative minded people. You get nowhere merely by dividing these two divisions into subdivisions. Solely as a Liberal party, and a clear-cut one at that, can the Democratic party

hope for any dignified future. It is necessary for it to adopt a programme so intelligent, so liberal, that any man with a trace of Liberalism in him will be compelled to leave the Republican party and join the Democratic. During the last campaign flashes of this were seen, but the whole programme was so disconnected, so extemporized, that only extreme Liberals were willing to take a chance.

But the first thing any Liberal party must do is to disregard the present South. The policies of the Democratic party must be framed by the Liberal North and the Liberal States of the West, and the South be permitted to take or leave those policies as it sees fit. To do otherwise is simply thrice to confound confusion and to create a programme of compromise that will attract no intelligent or honest voter. Personally, I would rather today, wild as the statement may seem, count upon building up a liberal Democratic majority in the black Republican State of Pennsylvania than in the former Democratic State of Virginia. In the last election Pennsylvania gave Governor Smith 1,200,000 votes, a little more than half the total Southern Democratic vote.

WHAT is the hope that any of this will be accomplished? Very little, I imagine. Political parties do not function that way. Save when a new party is born, chance controls them, not intelligent intention. Only a very great leader can reconstruct the Democratic party, and at the last election the party itself, particularly the Southern wing of it, forced into retirement the only leader it has who so far has exhibited signs of a growing greatness. What is likely to happen is that

the Democratic party will drag along, confused, rudderless, half Liberal, half ultra-Conservative, until mysterious economic forces over which no political party has any control damage the reputation of its opponents. Just at present the chances of such a contingency are remote.

SINCE the Civil War the Democratic party has been considerably more a subject for epigram than congratulation. To one trained to visualization, it represents a picture of a rabble of bitter enemies shouting across a sunken road at each other. Between these two groups, paying no attention to the shouting, not even raising their heads, march the rank and file of the Republican party; not very pretty, perhaps, not in the least inspiring, but marching. It has been said of the Democratic party that it invariably contains the wisest men and the biggest fools in the country. That is true. It has also been said that no two Democrats can sit in a room without hurling pitchers of ice-water at each other. Can you, for example, imagine any men more antipathetic than the Hon. John F. Fitzgerald of Boston and the Hon. Josephus Daniels of North Carolina; unless it be the Mayor of New York and the Governor of Texas? In all the ranks of the Republican party there are no such contradictions. The Republican party is not Roman Catholic in one section and bitterly Protestant in another; it is not confirmedly wet in the North and confirmedly dry in the South; it is not rural in the small States and aggressively urban in the big. It is immoral, moist, non-sectarian, and wickedly efficient.

But if there is so little hope for the

liberal voter in either of the major parties, is there any hope for him or her in the minor parties? Norman Thomas, recent candidate for President on the Socialist ticket, says there is. I wish his statements were convincing. They are not. It is all very well for him to say that the newspapers of America no longer confuse Socialism with Communism. The newspapers of the United States may not. On the whole they are edited by men who can read and write. But the average voter of the United States hates and dreads the word Socialism as much as he hates and dreads the words Soviet Republic or Fascist Italy.

MOREOVER, even if I can read and write, I would like Mr. Thomas to explain just the difference between Socialism and Communism. The Socialist party in the United States will not win a victory in a hundred years until it changes its name. In all Socialistic doctrine, the very basis of Socialism is the theory of the abolition of private property. Theoretically, economically, that may be correct, although I do not think so; but practically no such theory can ever be put into operation in any Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic country, save by a short-lived revolution. There has been nothing throughout history so marking the racial differences between the Slav, or even Latin, on the one hand, and the Anglo-Saxon and Teuton on the other, as the inherent passion of the latter races for land and private ownership.

When I say that, I step out of my rôle as an amateur political prophet and with much more assurance assume my real rôle of practical psychologist and observer of nations. In common with most English speaking and German speaking Liberals, I dread the doctrinarianism of the Socialist just as much as I do the depraved opportunism of the professional Conservative. Charming as Mr. Thomas is, I should hate to have him as my President. Reasonable as he is, he cannot help, being a Socialist, being also a doctrinaire. Moreover, I know no social or political theories so "dated" as those of the Socialists. The world will have to seek a new cure.

EX-GOVERNOR SMITH has recently called for "a militant policy to promote the principles" of the Democratic party. Very well, Governor; but before we begin to fight, what exactly — word for word, sentence for sentence — are those principles? And what are you going to do with Governor Moody of Texas, Senator Hefflin of Alabama, Senator George of Georgia, Senator Glass and Bishop Cannon of Virginia, and that grand old "Republican" wheel-horse, Senator Furnifold McL. Simmons, of North Carolina? What are you going to do with the old Democratic party, so that you and your liberal supporters throughout the country may live comfortably and at peace beneath the standard of a new Democratic doctrine? What, in a word, will you do with the South?



The Flight from the Farm

BY ROSS L. HOLMAN

When farmers' properties go at auction for five cents on the dollar, it is not surprising that two million a year abandon agriculture for city industries

NOT long ago I attended a closing out sale of farm equipment and personal property. A cultivator, for which the owner had paid forty dollars and which he had used only a few days, brought only two dollars and eighty-five cents. A twenty dollar roller brought three dollars. Two or three turning plows each sold for less than what it would cost to buy a new point for one of them. A large mare, fat and unblemished, was knocked off at eleven dollars, and two horses not quite so good, but in medium shape, brought one dollar each.

Occasionally, on some of the articles, the auctioneer had much trouble in getting bids at all. When his pleading for bids grew monotonous, some one would bid a fraction of a dollar, more to get him to move on to the next article than for any desire he may have had for the article on which he bid.

The equipment sold was in good condition, and the sale would have been unique in the bargains offered and the lack of any desire on the part of the crowd to take advantage of them, if it were not for the fact that you could find repetitions of it by tens of thousands throughout all sections

of the country. In fact, farm sales of this character are becoming the rule with fewer and fewer exceptions. While the conditions, of course, are not as bad in some sections as in others, you will find roads and highways throughout the entire country, wherever agriculture is, or has been, a going industry, plastered with bills announcing these sales. Many county papers are having to print a number of extra sheets each week to give due publicity to these closing out auctions.

I do not believe there has ever before been such feverish anxiety on the part of farmers to unburden themselves of farms and farm equipment. There are so many trying to sell out or wanting to sell out that naturally there are few left to buy. Hence, the main reason for low and slow bidding at farm sales.

Many of these sales are foreclosures. The owner has fought a losing fight for a number of years, and creditors take over his property to salvage whatever part of his indebtedness they can for themselves before he becomes more heavily involved. Other farmers, who are heavily in debt, are selling out vol-