

The daily press of the State frankly admits that a few years ago the spectacle of a Negro appealing to the members of

the Mississippi Legislature for fair play would not have been possible.

Who can deny that the overhanging

clouds of race prejudice are slowly but surely becoming less ominous and menacing in Mississippi?

# The Revolt Against Politics

Special Correspondence from Washington

By STANLEY FROST

WASHINGTON is at last getting back to normal, after its long spree on scandal. The slithy toves of gossip still gyre and gimble on the muck-heaps, to be sure, but their audience is walking out. Partly it is feeling its appetite gone from too steady a diet of high meat; partly it is waking up to the fact that almost nothing that was both believable and important has been uncovered for weeks; partly it is finding the show far below the advance notices. But mostly the change of interest is due to the fact that the pre-convention campaigns are finally under way and the time has come to take stock of the political results of the racket.

## *What's in Sight? Politics!*

THE interest is all the more intense because political results are about the only ones in sight. Suits have been started over the oil leases, Denby and Daugherty have gone, but the constructive things that might have held interest have not appeared. There is no sign that any of the larger benefits which at first seemed possible will come to pass. The politicians of both parties are still fighting along the old lines and by the old methods; neither organization has confessed sin or brought forth fruits meet for repentance. No leadership toward higher political standards has been manifested. There has been no Governmental house-cleaning. No public pressure upon Congress has been enough to make it do its work or watch the public interest. The net result seems to be chiefly that politics this year is going to be a good bit dirtier than common.

Yet the politicians are far from happy—even the Democrats, who quite naturally had expected to benefit from the unhappiness of the Republicans. Reports which are reaching men of both parties here, and they are confirmed from other sources, are that the exposures have added nothing to the Democratic assets; even that, because of the way some of the scandals have been handled, the Democrats have actually hurt themselves. The people who quit the Republican party seem to be going nowhere.

None but the paid cheer leaders are shouting around the standard of Democracy.

So both parties find that through much of the country their machines are rattling skeletons, without flesh or power. The professionals, the politicians for revenue only, the paid captains, all these are waiting for recruits—waiting. Only the Progressives and third party men are happy, for they can see profit in the wreckage.

The death of the old parties and birth of new ones has been so steadily prophesied during the last few campaigns that one hesitates to cry "wolf" again. And, in fact, though the time of reckoning has drawn much nearer, and the symptoms of decay are working toward a crisis, the time is not yet. There is almost no chance that any third party movement this year could win more than a very few States and a handful of electoral votes. No matter how broken the old parties may be, a new movement needs a vital purpose, a great rallying cry and inspiring leaders, and the third party folks are as poor in real issues or real leadership as either of the old machines. They have plenty of discontent to work on, and nothing else. That is enough to make much trouble, but far from enough to create an army and inspire a cause.

Even if they had light and leading, however, the mechanics of politics would make a third party movement almost hopeless just now. A vast organization is required, backed by large funds. The mutineers have no time to build the one nor power to raise the other. Also, in spite of grumbling and discontent, the habit of voting the straight and regular ticket is hard to break, and there will be far less rebellion at the polls than the noise it makes might indicate. Finally, the Progressives themselves are none too confident in their own cause, and hesitate to leave the security of the party lines and the power the present session of Congress has proved they have there for a place in a new and untried army. So the chance that a third party can show any large strength or come anywhere near success can be dismissed.

In spite of this, however, a third party or an independent candidate can still play hob with the campaign. The scandals have brought us a long step nearer the long-foretold new alignment. They have greatly increased the popular revolt against present political methods and the present political leadership, and enlarged the number who will try almost anything in the hope that it may help. And, because of certain peculiarities in the political balance of power this year, even a small revolt at the polls which won nothing for itself might produce a situation without precedent in our politics, and one in which almost anything might happen. There may be no issue but oil, and yet the campaign will for these other reasons be the most pregnant in half a century.

## *The Voters are Uneasy*

THE revolt against politics has been clear for some years to those who could see, though this does not include most politicians. There has been going on an unintended education of voters with which the average party worker has not kept up. For a long time people in revolt against one party would merely turn to the other. It took generations for them to make certain that this left them no better off. Then for a while they tried various political patent medicines, and it took other generations to learn that these were usually worthless. The two lessons have been crystallizing for the last fifteen years into a vague but deep desire for a new deal all around. The number who share this desire, and still more the number who are willing to do something about it, has been increasing steadily. This year it has taken a big jump, but it is still uncertain—and that is the biggest uncertainty in politics to-day—because the revolt has so often shown itself in strange and warped forms that its actual size is hard to estimate. But it is big, and growing.

It has been this, far more than any particular trouble or belief in any particular plan, that has caused the unrest in the Middle West, where the revolt is strongest. It has sent Brookhart and

Magnus Johnson to the Senate merely because they were new timber. It is a chief reason for the Ku Klux Klan. It was the strength of the Ford boom, and herein is the best proof that it is revolt and not a reasoned demand, for Ford had no platform. He was not a politician; therefore they wanted him!

### *Wanted, Some One to Holler*

I FOUND an illustration of this attitude a while back in a little farming town in Iowa. The local debaters were gathered in the back room of the bank, and I asked why they had elected such a man as Brookhart.

"To make a noise," a bearded farmer declared, and the rest nodded. "Those folks in Washington don't pay any attention to what we need, and we want to remind 'em that we're alive. We tried smooth fellers first—regular politicians, you know—and they just played politics and didn't get us anything. Brookhart, he'll make a noise."

"How about his policies?" I asked. "Do you want the things he's shouting for?"

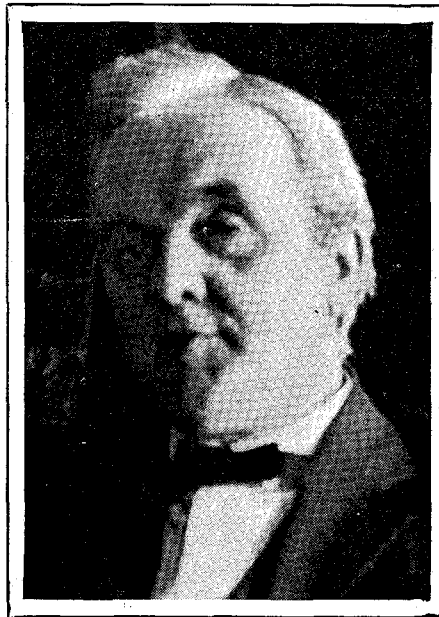
"Hell, no!" was the answer. "We didn't pay any notice to his schemes. He can't get 'em, anyway. We just wanted somebody to holler for us."

To this state of mind the scandals have now added deep disgust. The country had begun to hope we were through with actual corruption, at least, and its awakening is bitter. It would, a few years ago, have turned with one mind to the Democratic party. But the country's ability to diagnose politics has improved, and it is almost as disgusted with the Democratic scalp-dancers as with the men they are attacking. This disgust is so bitter that many men, not ordinarily given to seeing ghosts, are beginning to discuss seriously whether representative government is breaking down. If they do vote Democratic, it will be with deep misgivings.

Probably the best representative in Washington of this Mid-Western revolt is Senator Norris, of Nebraska. He is a Progressive, yet not part of La Follette's kite-tail. He often goes with La Follette, but does not live on his favor and is not bound to follow him. His thinking is not complicated by Presidential hopes, and he runs no political machine such as La Follette does. When I asked him about the present state of mind in the Middle West, he explained that he had not made any detailed study recently, but, with this reservation, gave his diagnosis.

"They are tired of the political machines out there," he declared. "They are just as tired of one machine as of the other. Both are alike, and the people

have found it out. They are full of disgust, dissatisfaction, and rebellion against political conditions. They want decent government, for the benefit of all the people, and they know they're not



Fotograms

Senator Norris, of Nebraska

getting it. The scandals have simply made this feeling stronger than before."

### *First Find How to Do It*

"WHAT is their programme, their practical demands?" I asked.

"Really, they haven't any. They have some ideas for reforms, but they are not very enthusiastic about any of them. They do want to get rid of the machines. They have come to believe that so long as there is a machine there will be corruption in one form or another. A machine costs money—a lot of money. Somebody has to pay for it, and people don't spend money unless they expect to get it back. The only way a machine or the backers of a machine can get it back is at the expense of the rest of the people. The whole trouble is that there is no way for the voters to elect independent men, who won't be under obligations to any machine. When they find out how to do that, they'll go after it. Now they are simply disgusted.

"No, they don't particularly want a new party. They know that it will have to have a machine, too, and that it would soon be as bad as the old ones."

This, the politicians are learning with grief, is the state of mind they must deal with in the campaign. In spite of the clamor for this or that scheme, in spite of the twelve progressive planks in La Follette's platform, in spite of the issues the old parties have so carefully framed up, they find that the country is interested in only one issue—clean and decent politics—and that it has about decided

it can't get it from either old party. This is an issue which the political professionals will find it hard to meet with the kind of flapdoodle they know how to handle. Almost all of them admit that if there were a vigorous third party in the field it would win easily.

### *A New Style Revolt*

BUT this is not all their grief. There has broken out this spring a new revolt against the politicians, in a place where it was least expected. This is among the business men who usually pay the bills. This year they are refusing to open their check-books or wallets. They, too, are disgusted. They, too, want a new political deal. They, even more than the ordinary voters, feel that they have been cheated, have not got at all what they paid for. So the political committees and campaign managers are already in trouble, and very despondent. They feel themselves alone on burning decks.

The blight of this fire has struck both parties, and is like nothing that has ever happened before. It apparently is not a concerted movement—merely a wide personal disgust with present-day politics and distrust of present political leaders. It is another proof of the great opportunity for a real party or real leadership if either should appear.

### *Progressive Possibilities*

THE Progressives, of course, will do what they can with this opportunity, in spite of the almost killing difficulties in the way of a third party this year. Besides ambition they have a compelling reason for vigorous action in the increasing age and physical weakness of Senator La Follette. The movement has had little cohesion except around his own personality—he almost literally owns it—and his retirement, which must come soon, would leave it in dire straits. So there is a great anxiety, while he can still lead, to bring out of the Progressive nebula a platform which could be pointed to as his gospel, and an organization which could inherit his mantle, and so could be kept in motion. The need of this is so great that even if he should be compelled to retire this year the plans would still be carried out in an effort to gather his prestige while it was still fresh.

There are serious difficulties in the way of third party action, however. The Progressive-Republicans have found it paid them well at the polls to hang on to the Republican label, however little they belonged inside the party. Even in Congress they have been somewhat more effective as borers from within, though they might still do well if they became a third party; there would always be the chance to hold a balance of power as at



present. But at the polls they could not do nearly so well if they lost the party label. Few of them can command an actual majority in their own States or districts. Most have succeeded by having enough support to win in the Republican primaries, and have later depended on the "regulars" to make up a majority and carry the election. They would have much less chance of success in three-cornered races, and they do not wish to be martyrs.

The plan that has finally been hit on, however, seems to them to meet this objection. They intend to keep the party label, and still make a separate National race. Each in his own bailiwick will follow the old plan and hold tight to all the advantages of regularity; they will leave the party only on the Presidential race. To make this possible their candidate for President—La Follette for choice—will run, not as a third party man, but merely as an independent.

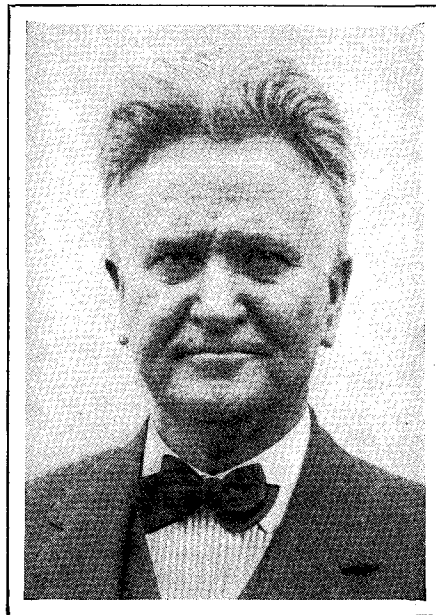
### *Regular in Name, But—*

To give this plan an appearance of justification, it is necessary to make some gesture of regularity at the National Convention; a gesture that will still leave them free—in fact, that will make it seem that they are forced—to take independent action later. The publication of the La Follette platform was the beginning of this gesture. It is announced that if the Republican party becomes liberal and adopts that platform the Progressives will support it and its candidate; if it remains conservative, they will have to fight for their principles. But that platform, calling for Government ownership of railways, a Nationally owned water-power and electric system, abolition of injunction in labor disputes, and all the rest, is clearly one the Republicans cannot adopt. So the Progressives' gesture of loyalty takes no risks, but will be a proof of good intentions to those who will accept it as such.

The nameless "independent" campaign that will follow is already assured of considerable support. The Farmer-Labor party is expected to swing in behind. The Conference for Progressive Political Action, which is under control of the railway unions, has given up hope for McAdoo, and will add its support. The Committee of Forty-eight will probably do likewise, though its reputation for lunacy is such that the Progressives would be as happy without it. Finally, each of the Progressives—still remaining inside the Republican party—would give what aid he could.

Practically all political observers concede that such a campaign would win for the independent candidate at least six States: Wisconsin, Minnesota, the two

Dakotas, Nebraska, and Wyoming. Some add Washington, Montana, Colorado, and Kansas, but few even of the most hopeful Progressives claim more than this. It would give somewhere be-



Fotograms

Senator La Follette, of Wisconsin

tween fifty and ninety electoral votes out of the total of 541. On its face, this small success would be useless to the Progressives.

Yet, because of the probability that the remaining electoral votes would be nearly evenly divided, it might become a great triumph for them and precipitate a truly unique situation. If that happened, there would be no election by the Electoral College, and under an almost forgotten provision of the Constitution the House of Representatives would be called on to elect. The last time this was done was just a hundred years ago, when the House elected John Quincy Adams over Jackson, Calhoun, and others.

In an election by the House each State has a single vote, like a State delegation to a convention under the "unit rule," and the choice of the House is limited to the three leading candidates. It would be the House with its present membership that would act, but guesses vary as to how it would act. The Progressives have demonstrated that they control the present House through holding the balance of power, but they might not do so on a count by States. Five States have evenly divided delegations; three would probably be Progressive, but the Constitution requires a majority of all the States for an election. There is of course no telling just how various members might react to such a situation, or whether the party lines could be held solid, but the estimates indicate that, on the present basis, the Republicans could not possibly win, the Democrats might

have a bare chance of winning, but that probably there would be a deadlock.

In that case the responsibility would go to the Senate, which would have the power to choose between the two leading candidates for Vice-President one who should hold office as President till a special election could be held, and would then drop back to Vice-President. The Senators would vote as individuals—and the Progressives hold the balance of power. But there is hardly a chance that the independent candidate for Vice-President would be eligible.

### *Possible but Not Likely*

THERE is a third possibility, that the Electoral College would come to life, exercise the discretion which still legally belongs to it, and elect a President. It could choose any man it wished; even, possibly, the man best fitted for the job! There is small chance of this. The College has long been a form; the votes are cast in the various State Capitols under the law, the Electors are supposed to have no discretion. But this is custom, not law. As recently as the Hayes-Tilden fight, the election was actually decided by one Elector changing from his instructions, and the precedent was established that the House, in canvassing the vote, could not go behind the returns.

It could be done again. The College might meet, thrash out a decision, and then return to the State Capitols and vote. Or, without meeting, some Electors could decide for themselves to forget their instructions. If it should appear that both the College and the House were unable to elect, there is no doubt that a great effort would be made on both sides to get enough of them to do this to elect a President.

From all this welter almost anything might happen: the election of any imaginable dark horse, the birth of new parties, of new political standards, the return of the old power of the Electoral College—anything. It is a situation such as the country has never faced; it holds possibilities that cannot be even guessed.

It is far from certain that it will come to pass, for the election is still far off, but it is well within the range of probability, and is being seriously considered by the most hard-headed politicians. I tried the other day, for instance, to get one National leader to talk about the coming conventions.

"Not interested," he snapped, for his troubles are heavy. "Don't make a damn bit of difference who's nominated—either party. Neither of 'em will be elected."

He is not a seventh son, of course, and he is sorely tried, but his guessing power is fairly good, and he does know politics.

# Platforms of the People

THE OUTLOOK'S inquiry as to what the people desire in the form of party platforms has been most gratifying in point of the generous number of answers received and the very apparent care with which the ballots have been prepared. As this is written three days after the date of publication of the plan in the issue of March 26, it has been possible only to analyze and tabulate the hundreds of ballots received in that relatively brief period. And in studying this report the reader must constantly bear in mind that it is based, without exception, upon the preferences expressed by men and women living along the Atlantic seaboard between Boston and Philadelphia. Even now as we go to press later returns indicate that all other reports as they are published week by week will include the entire country.

Not only are ballots coming in from all sections, but for the most part all the subjects have been considered. But, as we have said, this report deals only with the early replies from that particular section mentioned above. Those who hastened to fill out and mail in the ballots were business and professional men and women, clergymen, students, lawyers, engineers, and housewives. And by the number of remarks inclosed one must conclude that they are giving considerable thought to all the important National questions. Party lines do not seem to be so closely drawn as one might imagine in a Presidential year. It will be noted that only seven per cent favor nationalization of the railways. The majority would have voluntary consolidation. Both Republicans and Democrats who approve of voluntary consolidation are against nationalization and compulsory consolidation. The question of continuing the Esch-Cummins Act was ignored in more than half the ballots. Nearly half of them reject the idea of compulsory reduction of freight rates.

While the extension of farm credits is generally approved, many hold that questions of agricultural relief should not be made an issue in the campaign. It is to be borne in mind, of course, that the ballots have come in from non-agricultural communities.

Nearly everybody favors the Mellon plan for tax reduction, and a large third favor a Federal tax on land held out of use. Party principles have developed far more strongly in regard to tariff questions than in any other question. Only ten per cent of the replies favor a bonus for ex-service men, two-thirds of the Republicans, all the Democrats, and a ma-

jority of the Independents voting against the proposal.

Few persons object to rigid enforcement of the prohibition laws, and the majority appear to object to increasing the alcoholic content. Yet few ignored the questions entirely—fewer than with most of the other issues. It tends to show that prohibition is still an issue, one, however, so involved that many have difficulty in forming a definite opinion. As a doctor remarks: "To approve a rigid enforcement plank would not be honest, because prohibition regulation cannot be *rigidly* enforced."

There appears to be little argument over the issues included under the heading "General Welfare." The majority of the few persons opposed to Congress legislating against exploitation of children in industry are frankly connected directly or potentially in one way or another with their employment. Many ignore the idea of a Federal employment agency, evidently believing it is not a National issue.

Federal aid for education is indorsed, though a fourth of the returns are against it. The thought on immigration is irrespective of party affiliations. The majority voting on the subject favor further restrictive measures, examination of prospective immigrants at ports of departure, and registration of aliens.

There is little or no opposition toward the idea of this country developing the National defense, bringing the Navy up to the standards set by the Naval Limitation Treaty, expanding the Air Service and, too, developing further the air mail service, which will be not only a medium of transport in peace but also an aeronautical reserve in case of emergency.

Only a fourth of the returns favor nationalization of the coal mines. The desire to retain the Railroad Labor Board is generally expressed regardless of party; likewise a majority favor injunctions in labor disputes.

The programme of the Ku Klux Klan as outlined in recent articles in The Outlook is for the most part ignored. A third of the ballots condemn that programme, many persons at the same time remarking that other organizations should likewise cease their activities.

Advocates and opponents of the Federal control of high-power transmission are almost equally divided in their opinions. A third of the replies ignore the money question; the vast majority giving it consideration condemn the idea of abandoning the gold standard. A vigorous conservation policy with extended Federal control over public properties is

generally recommended. The sale of Government ships to private owners is generally recommended, with a majority opposing Government operation. A Federal ship subsidy is indorsed.

There is practically no opposition to plans for reorganizing the Government, though a fifth of the returns have ignored the subject utterly.

It will be seen from the table that very few persons condemn the Administration's policy of non-recognition of Russia, and they, too, are among those condemning the idea of least possible participation in foreign affairs. It is interesting to note that relatively few are willing to condemn the World Court plan, while nearly a fourth of the Republicans approve the League of Nations. Half the voters, irrespective of party affiliations, seem to want either one or the other. The cancellation of foreign debts is generally disapproved, either by condemnation or ignoring the idea.

There are many added platforms with numerous planks. There is considerable feeling over the recent disclosures in Washington. Such suggestions as "Vote for a new candidate who is not a Congressional investigator" are numerous. One reads in the margins of the ballots many expressions concerning a "do-nothing Congress." There is also a growing sentiment against the so-called secret police, whether employed by the Government or private individuals.

A Democrat who was once a Progressive says, "Clean house at Washington." Another would have reorganization of the Army. Many indorse a plank to protect coastal waters and marine life against pollution. Several mention such planks as uniform divorce laws. A doctor suggests a National licensing law for physicians. A college man suggests dominion status for the Philippines. A Republican accepts the principle of high-power transmission, but is dubious of Government control.

Meanwhile the ballots are coming in daily, in quantities sufficient to indicate that there are thousands of persons throughout the country who are willing to take the time necessary in a thorough consideration of the subjects listed. Many go further and write letters. The requests for numbers of extra blanks are numerous. As the poll progresses from week to week, and the results, considered as cumulative, are published, it is obvious that a record will be established which will show clearly and conclusively at least what the thinking people of the country want.