

follows an economic spree of wasteful expenditure and reckless taxation. Sometimes I wonder if the entire country is not in the same pathological condition.

This condition is not incurable. The remedy, however, is not doses of political tonics and stimulants, but a simple diet of efficiency and economy. The North-

west is convalescent and is, I think, inclined to try this diet. Who knows but that it may get well before the rest of us do!

# Campaign Gold and Guff

Special Correspondence from Washington

By STANLEY FROST

FROM now until election day and for a time thereafter we shall be called on to give much attention to the evils of big campaign funds. The discussion has already started, and will become more and more vociferous. We shall be warned that wealth is trying to buy the country; be asked to view with horror the large sums spent, be called upon to castigate—with our votes—those who countenance these things. On the other hand, we shall be told that the laws give ample protection, that campaign funds are carefully audited so that no corruption is possible, that only the purest motives prompt the generous gifts, and that the objectors object merely because they could not get as much for themselves.

## *Tinsel Virtue*

MOST of this talk will be pure guff. The virtue will be about as flimsy as the vice. In fact, about the biggest single mess of hokum which we shall be called on to swallow during the campaign will be on this matter of campaign funds. It may be safely predicted that when it is all over we shall have gained practically nothing either for honesty in elections or toward a solution of the problem.

Yet this spending of millions at each election is a great problem and a very great evil. The trouble with the campaign shouters is that they hardly touch either the real evil or the real problem. Not that there is not some sincerity among them, but there is not much. Mostly the noise is unadulterated politics.

Largely because of this the things that have been done toward the curbing of the evil are pitifully ineffective. The Federal laws and Senate inquiries reach only a very small part of the trouble, and reach it very feebly. Even the most drastic of the new reforms offered is hardly better. The best that can be said of the campaign fund reform movement so far is that it has gone about as far as either the public or the politicians care to have it. That is saying little. It is

true that the public is distressed by the situation, true too that most politicians would be glad to change it. But real reform has been impossible because the politicians themselves, including as chief culprits some of the noisiest demanders of purity, have so steadily befogged the real conditions.

## *What Brands of Corruption Have We?*

THE carefully foisted popular misconception about campaign funds begins at the very beginning, with the kind of evil such funds do. We are told over and over again that they "buy elections," "corrupt the voters," and "debauch the Nation." They sometimes do this, to be sure, but most politicians know that this is a comparatively minor evil, and is not chargeable at all to the campaign funds which are in sight and which they talk about. The power of money to buy elections is strictly limited by public interest in the elections.

But this does not mean that the big campaign funds are any less evil. They may fairly be considered the worst sore in our politics to-day, the source of the largest part of the chicanery, misgovernment, and favoritism with which we are cursed. They strike deeply against the stability of our Government itself, for they have come to be an actual bribery of whole parties. This is far worse even than the bribery of any official or group of officials, for, whichever party happens to be running the Government, it will be under heavy obligations to the men who footed its campaign bills. No one doubts that those obligations are paid, and the knowledge of this traffic in Government favors does more than any other thing to destroy confidence and paralyze patriotism.

It is not necessary to assume that all contributors to campaign funds are trying to buy favors. On the contrary, the great majority of them are beyond question sincere, patriotic, and unselfish.

"To talk as if every one who gave a dollar to a campaign fund were crooked

is abominable," Secretary Lockwood, of the Republican National Committee, said to me. "There is every reason why men should give. The prosperity of the country, its honor and safety and its future development, are all likely to depend on which party wins. Every good citizen ought to do his share toward helping the party he believes in, and he ought to be safe from slander when he does. It is all bosh to say that a man can't give, and give big amounts, without some vicious motive. Men give to churches, charities, and causes of all kinds. There is no earthly reason why they shouldn't give for patriotic politics."

## *Gifts with Strings*

THIS is true as far as it goes. But it overlooks the fact that when a big gift is made there may be an obligation implied, though none may be expressed. Party managers would not be human if they did not feel that obligation, and rich men would not be human if they did not take advantage of it. To be sure, many of the big gifts are for considerations of personal advantage or prestige which may or may not do damage. But there are many other gifts made with an eye to some favor in a law (like the tariff) or a contract or for a little administrative blindness, or even as a speculation against unknown emergencies. It is hard to believe that any patriotic desire for the future of the country prompts gifts to both parties, such as Harry Sinclair so shamelessly avowed.

This fact of obligations incurred through campaign funds is true of either party, and is equally true whether the funds are big or little. So in actual practice the evil is non-partisan, even though the Republicans' funds have usually been from two to four times as large as the Democrats'. Here is the second misconception which has been fostered, for the loudest complaints come from the Democrats, and we are asked to believe that the sin is a Republican monopoly, which would be true if the object of the funds was to buy votes. Proof of the

insincerity of these partisan pleas can be found in places like New York and Chicago, where the Democrats are in position to raise large sums. There they are the ones with the money, and by the same token the Republicans seize upon virtue and complain of corruption!

The truth is that each party will use all it can get and get all it can. The party which falls behind can be depended upon to set up a cry of outraged righteousness, hoping thus to offset the other's cash. Fortunately for the country, these hypocritical protests do, in a measure, keep the evil in bounds.

### *Non-Partisan Buncombe*

THE conspiracy of buncombe has been non-partisan, too. It is not likely that any politician can ever tell the whole truth. Politicians are usually trying to hurt the other party, and the whole truth would hurt both about equally; hurt them badly, too. Then, no politician knows much of the truth except about his own party. The truth about his opponents is carefully hidden, and no decent politician wishes to make charges for which he cannot offer plausible color. Finally, one will not befool his own nest more than a little, and there are few who have not been tarred. The most exalted reformers are in one box with the rest in this, as witness the great sums spent in some of La Follette's campaigns. But mostly the reason for the bunkum is that the campaign-fund agitation comes usually from men who think they can win some partisan advantage or can claim some pleasing appearance of virtue. The truth is not wanted for either purpose.

Perhaps it is because of a feeling that the problem is too befogged for intelligent handling, or perhaps it is because we as a nation have got into the habit of letting politics run itself and yelling only after the damage has been done, that the public is so indifferent. It is certain that it is so, and does almost nothing to support the attempts at reform which are made. This has been tested over and over again when efforts have been made to get the public itself to finance campaigns and thus cure all the evils in one bundle. These efforts never succeed. The latest and most ambitious was made by Will Hays. He sent out a small army of men who had won great success in the war-time drives, and he proved that it cost nearly eighty cents on the dollar to raise money that way! Yet there is no political question where there is greater need of an active public opinion, based on full understanding.

This article is an attempt to give such a basis. Yet it must be admitted that it is impossible to give many exact facts.

They are too carefully kept under cover. They are the trade secrets of the politicians. It is only at odd times, in Pullman smokers, or across dinner tables, or late of nights when violation of the Volstead Act has been prolonged and successful, that the stories begin to come out. Some of them are fiction, some mere braggadocio. It is almost never possible to get names, places, and dates. Yet on the whole these stories are so much alike, and it is so often possible to verify parts of them, that in time one gains a fairly definite picture. That picture is startling.

To get at an understanding of the place of money in politics let us begin at the end and see how it is used. The first fact to be noted is that there is a legitimate use for really large sums if any campaign is to have much chance of success. The cost of primaries, the need of getting one's case before the voters, the increase in the number of voters since woman suffrage, the details of organization—all these have made the requirements staggering.

### *Where the Money Goes*

IMMENSE sums may be spent in activities which are beyond question. There are rental of offices and pay of workers in them, shocking telegraph, telephone, and postage bills, pay and expenses for traveling organizers, pay for hosts of local workers, and on election day the heavy cost of "getting out the vote" by providing transportation, checking the voting lists, prodding the negligent, and hiring watchers at the polls. All this is virtually routine, but absolutely necessary if the party is to cast a full vote and see that it gets an honest count. The total cost is enormous.

This is only part. There is the cost of propaganda or education. This is necessary, too, if the party is to have a fair hearing; it is actually a valuable part of the political education of the country. Yet it, too, costs enormously. Remember that a National campaign ought to reach some 30,000,000 voters, that a single letter to each would cost above \$1,000,000, and that a vigorous campaign calls for several letters, with copies of speeches, platforms, etc. This could quite properly run to fifty cents a voter—\$15,000,000—even without the least waste. Then there is the cost of speakers, bands, halls, parades, and all the paraphernalia for the manufacture of morale and enthusiasm. A good many millions may easily be spent not only blamelessly but usefully.

This is not to say that all campaign money is so spent; no one at all familiar with politics but knows that there is an

immense amount of corruption, though less than in the good old days. Little of it now is in the actual buying of votes. Much is done by hiring as "workers" men who would as willingly work for the other party, by placing contracts where they will do the most good and making them fat, by needless but plausible expenses of all kinds. Perhaps this cannot even be called corruption, and certainly it is not reached by law. But it is effective.

Another lot of money goes for corruption of election machinery. Even this is often not direct bribery. A story illustrating the methods used came to me recently in a State where each faction prepares its own primary ballots. There is a district which had long been hostile to the county bosses, and they finally offered a worker \$200 if he could turn it over. He did; yet they saw no activity. After he had been paid, they asked about it.

"It was easy," he said. "I joined their gang. Of course they wouldn't trust me, but I hung around till they brought in their ballots, all folded and ready to distribute. I'd had some printed that looked like the regular ones, but carried our slate. All I did was to switch the bundles."

The employment of repeaters, of strong-arm men to drive voters away from the polls, and the direct purchase of votes are becoming comparatively rare, though still done in some places.

In fact, only a fraction of the total cost of any campaign actually appears on the official reports. And this is the cream of the campaign-fund bunk, for the whole assumption that underlies the current discussion, even by most of the agitators, is that the official reports do give a real picture of the situation. No more dangerous perversion of truth is being foisted on America to-day.

The perversion is of two kinds. In the first place, the campaign funds on which reports are made cover only a part of the ground, and a small part. They are made by the National, Senatorial, Congressional, and State committees of the big parties and the leading candidates. Yet the amounts spent by the minor local organizations and candidates reach a far greater total. In the second place, even these impressive reports do not show the whole of the funds used, nor do they give any valuable or complete information as to where the money comes from or where it goes.

These reports are required by law, under prescribed forms. They give a name and amount for each gift, another name and amount for each expenditure. They ought to reveal much, but actually



tell so little that one is driven to the suspicion that the men who framed them did not intend that they should be worth anything. They do give some information, but it is so incomplete and meaningless as to be valueless.

### *The Truth but Not the Whole Truth*

IN the 1920 campaign, for example, the reports show that the Republican National Committee received \$5,319,729.32 and the Democratic National Committee \$1,318,274.02. They give the names of those who contributed. But they do not show that the Republicans had a deficit of \$1,600,000 and the Democrats of \$300,000. These deficits were made up after the election, and there is no official report on the donors. This, obviously, leaves wide scope for sculduggery.

But this is only the beginning of the bluff at giving the facts. The list of donors is a joke. Few large gifts are shown, because the large gifts can be concealed by the simple system of dividing them and having the parts ascribed to different men. Often the names of the biggest givers do not appear at all. Moreover, the list of expenditures is another joke. It is probable that in fact there is not a single improper expenditure charged to these funds—as will be shown, there are other ways of handling such expenditures—but the accounts leave plenty of opportunity for any fraud. They should show how much was spent for each important purpose, such as telephones, office rent, etc., but all they do show is a list of vouchers, often with nothing to indicate the purpose for which the voucher was drawn. There is no summary or analysis such as the poorest business man would demand; nothing to give any real information about where the money went.

The biggest joke of all is that big sums—probably the biggest sums—spent during the campaign do not appear in the reports at all. From the records, and by adding the known deficits, it is possible to get some figures on the total cost of the 1920 campaign. These show, for the combined funds as reported by the National, Senatorial, Congressional, and State committees, a total of \$9,700,738 for the Republicans and \$2,537,750 for the Democrats. There should be added \$2,980,033 spent by various candidates for the Presidency in the pre-convention campaigns. The sum is \$15,218,521. It seems enough. Yet conservative politicians estimate the actual cost at anywhere from \$150,000,000 to \$500,000,000.

This enormous total is made up mostly

from comparatively small items. There were, in the first place, the primary and pre-convention expenses of many thousands of candidates for offices from dog-catcher to governor all over the country. There were the campaign expenses of not quite so many thousand nominees. There were the expenses of county and district committees, and of organizations in every township, village, and city. No one of these is very great, but because there are so many the total is far beyond the total of the recorded funds.

Moreover, if gossip and the stories told by politicians have any truth, the biggest expenditures of all were never listed, never even passed through the hands of the committees. There was a sample of this form of evasion shown in the Newberry hearings, which revealed that in his campaign many thousands had been spent by friends personally. They hired workers, bought advertising space, sent out literature, organized clubs, financed parades, did a hundred things that cost money, but all at their own expense. There can be no doubt that the same thing is done in every campaign everywhere. "Friends" of candidates take over personally the handling of parts of the work, and finance it by means which are never reported; there is nothing but suspicion to show the real origin of the funds they use. It seems possible that the official campaign managers know something about this, since the free-lance work always seems to fit in, but they do not know enough to put it into their reports. Thus the law is observed—and the money spent.

### *A Fake Cure for a Real Evil*

WORST of all, it is in this way that the actual corruption is paid for. It is doubtful whether the campaign managers or candidates ever know anything about this officially, except that they may be asked to send around some "safe" man. The "friend" and the "safe" man do the rest, and through them the money eventually gets to the places where it will talk most effectively. This is criminal, of course, and there are laws against it. But it is not connected with the official campaign funds, and when orators talk as if campaign-fund reform would cure this evil they are selling gold bricks.

No one can do more than guess as to the actual amounts of money spent; not even the worst corruptionist or the best-informed political bushwhacker knows much outside a limited area. It goes without saying that no one has ever compiled totals. Every politician with whom I have discussed the subject admits without hesitation that the actual total

is far above the \$15,000,000 shown; most of them guess that the official statements tell about ten per cent of the truth. Their estimate is, naturally, based on what each knows of conditions in his own territory, and I am inclined to accept it as fair. No one guessed at a lower total cost than \$150,000,000, but some guessed far higher and one as high as \$500,000,000.

Let it stand at \$150,000,000, however. That is enough to give an insight into the real danger and the real problem.

### *Panaceas that Offer no Hope*

AS remedies we have so far nothing more than the laws already described. They are better than nothing, probably, but they do not give effective supervision of even the big funds, and the supervision is increasingly mythical as we get down the line to the smaller political units, where the real money is spent.

Further remedies are being offered. There is no need of charging insincerity to demonstrate the childishness of most of them. Mr. Bryan has recently suggested a ten-cent tax on all voters, the proceeds to be divided between the parties. One difficulty with this scheme is that it would cost more than the amount of the tax to collect it. Another suggestion has been that the Government defray the cost of campaigns, a scheme that would insure unfairness to any new political movement. There is certainly no easy solution in sight; about all that can be said is that election purity is rather less easy to enforce than is the Volstead Act, but that it will be improved slowly by stopping one leak after another.

But for the present campaign the evil is great and constant, both of the subtle bribery of the great parties in the Nation and the States, and of direct and raw corruption farther down the line. The laws give practically no protection against it. It is one more case where only eternal vigilance has any value, and to vigilance must be added equally eternal protest and effective resentment wherever even the suspicion of wrong appears.

There is no doubt that in this, as in all other things, the politicians will submit to public opinion as soon as it becomes clear and effective. Indeed, they would be glad to be free, would be glad to have the use of big funds punished if the punishment could fall equally on all, but so long as they are in politics they will use whatever methods will succeed. So the campaign-fund evil will not be cured till we, the public, change the conditions of political success.



# Portraits of



Courtesy of Dr. Thomas L. Bennett

Anders Zorn and his wife, by himself