

# TV and Radio

## "IT SAYS HERE WE SHOULD TALK"

TELEVISION'S image of the Democratic or (as the Republican orators are so cunningly calling it this year) the "Democrat" Party's convention will be yesterday's show when this column is in print. The nominations will have been witnessed, the demonstrations endured—and all the audio-visual details of the political circus, serious, trivial, antic, dull, or disturbing, will be history. "Politics in the public eye," says an NBC ad, "makes for a show you'll tell your grandchildren about."

I don't know what the reader will tell his grandchildren about; but civil rights, filibuster, Governor Adlai Stevenson, President Truman, or any dark horse running to or from the nomination notwithstanding, I do not believe the second exposé from Chicago of the nation's chief game for adults will produce anything to rival the spectacle when Mr. (then General of the Army) Dwight D. Eisenhower broke convention tradition and called on Senator Robert A. Taft at the defeated candidate's headquarters in the Conrad Hilton hotel for a closing-of-the-ranks posture and a joint harmony statement.

The Puerto Rico delegate demanding a roll-call of three was amusing; Representative Dirksen's pointing of the accusatory finger at Governor Dewey was a study in hate; General MacArthur's keynote address was a lesson in anticlimax; Minnesota's change of vote, which climactically threw the victory to Ike, was a brilliant riposte in the unexpected, etc. But for a scene "coming up like thunder," a Roman-candle scene of words, pictures, and silences, of Elizabethan fustian, Mack Sennett gaiety, Biblical bitterness, and Homeric irony and pity—the denouement at the Conrad Hilton goes into my permanent memory vault as exhibit A.

The reader may have missed it: it happened—like death and triumph in a comparable arena—in the afternoon. The sudden nomination after the first ballot caught everyone by surprise, particularly the television networks. In a later column, when TV's coverage of both conventions is available for appraisal, the writer hopes to comment on it. Meanwhile, whatever one may think of the conventions themselves, it is obvious beyond the largest cavil that TV, the eye that talks, did a magnificent reporting job, rich in distributional success and generous with con-

sequences for our now fluid political mores.

At the Conrad Hilton, though, immediately after the nomination, it appeared to this viewer that the TV production masterminds were caught with their cables and cameras kaput. Perhaps they had reckoned on Taft calling on Eisenhower at the winner's headquarters; perhaps the sudden excitement unhinged all precision. Whatever happened, events took the ball away from Republican Party convention organizers and network staffs alike. The marvelous moments that followed found television the unplanned, unwilling, and unmatched star of the show it was covering.

As the master-control panels cut to Taft's headquarters, the viewer faced a small, uncertain line of reporters facing their own cameras. Microphones in hand, earphones on head, cables snaking to perspiring technicians, the newsmen stood like Horatius, or as Greeks at Thermopylae, their backs resistant to the undulating surges of an anonymous, shirt-sleeved chorus behind them. Hectic, frantic, frenetic, they bumbled and gurgled in their adlibs, trying to find out what was happening, striving to be interesting, and



above all, heroically struggling not to be hipped out of the camera and away from the spot where they guessed the Taft-Eisenhower romance would be played.

The suavity of the TV-radio newsmen, cool, dispassionate, detached, was gone. It was every man for his network and the guilt of the damned to pay if he allowed himself to be strong-armed away from this pooled morsel. Antagonistic cooperators, the reporters jollied each other but their chins were out. Someone handed Clifton Utley, usually a brilliant analyst, a piece of paper. He glanced at it, fingered it, glanced at it again, and then said rather hysterically to two colleagues:

"It says here we should talk to each other."

Well, talk they did—the tapes have the record. It will never get into a textbook of model newscaster behavior under fire, but it was splendid, hilarious fun, fun at the newsmen's predicament, fun with them at the monkey-wrench in the show's untutored machine. It was the suffering-with-laughter mood that audiences enjoy most.

Then came a squad of cops boomeranging through the Chaplinesque world. They disappeared stage right and stage right they boomeranged back. It was Taft and Eisenhower. The laughter curiously enveloped the protagonists. Literally pushed and shoved into the choked iron ring of the camera's eye, the Senator and the General tried valiantly to maintain their mutual dignities. It was no go. The viewer felt for them, but the deflation of political pomposity made a delicious, hissing sound.

THE General suffered it with an amateur's amiability, but the Senator, more seasoned mufti campaigner (with little to lose now that he had lost), finally had enough. Like an irascible teacher he took control of the situation and braved the brief ceremony. And here came the bitterness, the irony, and the pity. For, as with set smiles, the victor and the vanquished rendered unto political expediency and the sportsman's code their perfunctory obeisance, tides of emotional conflict, via sympathetic identification, tugged at the viewer before his screen.

Beneath the General's mask lay the clear realization of the humiliating burden of brass-knuckle politics on the human psyche; beneath the Senator's the galling savor of defeat at the hands of a political novice. It was a moving tableau—and in an ambulatory sense it moved as hurriedly off stage as it had moved on. "That's all," said Senator Taft. The General grimly echoed him, and as the burly cops opened a hole in the chorus, the tragic actors disappeared and the clowns took the stage again.

Out of a magnificent, unstaged bedlam montage of shoulders, hands, backs, ear-lobes, and haircuts passing in close-up before the hot-breathing cameras, emerged the still-mumbling figures of the newsmen. Hair askew, eyes displaced, deservings of TV's purple heart, they staggered on defiantly, wearily, until merciful fade-out. It was an uproarious finish to an unforgettable scene played in concentric circles of high drama, small comedy, and epic background.

—ROBERT LEWIS SHAYON.

## SCIENCE & LIFE

(Continued from page 15)

exactly what their subject is. This reviewer believes that to be a healthy sign. Geography is not a social science, not a natural science, not a humanity; it is rather a bridge connecting all of them. As a science of relationships, geography has become a serious study for the very best minds.

Dr. Wright points out that the founders of the American Geographical Society were not concerned with the problem of defining geography during the 1850's and 1860's. Had educators been among the founders, this certainly would not have been the case.

By 1915 interest in physical geography in this country had passed its peak and most geographers were concerned primarily with human geography. At first human geographers attributed great influence to the natural environment. Ellen C. Semple expressed the idea this way: "Man is a product of the earth's surface. This means not merely that he is a child of the earth, dust of her dust; but that the earth has mothered him, fed him, set him tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties that have strengthened his body and sharpened his wits, given him his problems of navigation or irrigation, and at the same time whispered hints for their solution. She has entered into his bone and tissue, into his mind and soul . . ."

This type of thinking received a mighty impetus in the last half of the nineteenth century, when Darwin's theory of evolution led to a quest for rational explanations of biological and human phenomena in the processes of nature. Today few if any professional geographers would go so far as did Miss Semple. Most are today possibilists, not environmental determinists, and would tend to agree with Dr. J. Russell Smith when he says:

"We are beginning to develop a new mental attitude toward the universe, toward our environment. This is the attitude of scientific testing and scientific utilization . . . In the weighing of lands to determine their value to man, the geographer has had to change his scales every time science has put into his hands a new set of weights . . . For every discovery . . . we should have the means at hand to search the earth and experimentally test out all promising leads. Thus may man's life become adjusted to his environment and thus may his activities conserve and improve it."

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Chapter Six, "The Years of Isaiah Bowman," will be most interesting to professional geographers, for it was Bowman probably more than any other single person, who put American geography and the Society on the high plane they now occupy. This chapter gives an honest and accurate biographical portrait of the man.

Dr. Wright points out that it has taken two world wars to prove geography's value to the nation. In both conflicts the Society's facilities were placed at the disposal of the government. During World War II, a goodly portion of the younger geographers of the nation were called to Washington, where they worked with specialists in other disciplines on a wide range of problems.

In a review it is impossible to list the many great contributions of an organization that has lived for 100 years. Two projects, however, merit special attention. First is the Millionth Map—the American Geographical Society's largest undertaking in geographical research. Dealing with Hispanic America on the scale of 1:1,000,000, it covers the land areas and offshore waters of the Western Hemisphere south of the Rio Grande. It required a quarter century to complete it and cost more than half a million dollars. When the project was begun, no comparable map existed anywhere on such a scale. Since publication, the map has been put to countless uses. The second project, "The Atlas of Diseases," begun in 1948, is still in preparation and prob-

ably will be for many more years. In addition to the text, the "Atlas" includes large world maps in color.

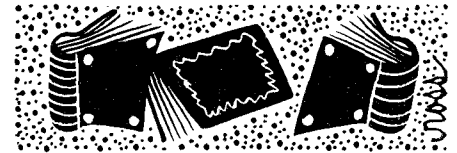
The American Geographical Society is still pioneering, undertaking fascinating and exciting new research projects, many in keeping with the views of its hard-headed and practical founders. Impressive as the Society's accomplishments during the first 100 years have been, it may be confidently expected that they will be even more impressive during the coming century.

## Science & Life Notes

**DEAD CITIES AND FORGOTTEN TRIBES.** By Gordon Cooper. *Philosophical Library*. \$4.75. Gordon Cooper, president of the Globetrotters' Club, has had many strange and exciting experiences during his travels to more than a hundred countries. Head-hunters of Peru have shot darts at him—"My companion and I then fired in the direction of the dartblowers. That was enough to prove our superiority." He sat on the Inca throne of Tiahuanaco in Bolivia, the New World's oldest city. He visited Southern Rhodesia to see the ruins of Zimbabwe, the City of Gold, which inspired Rider Haggard's "She." In Indo-China he bicycled 400 miles from Saigon to Angkor and watched the sun set on the broken and fallen Buddhas of the Angkor Wat, one of the world's great temples.

"Dead Cities and Forgotten Tribes" is a series of brief accounts of these and other relics of past cultures. It covers a good deal of territory, ranging from lost valleys in Canada and New Guinea to the ruins of ancient Greece and the skyscraper cities of South Arabia deserts (many of the buildings are ten to twelve stories high). One of the most unusual tales concerns a place rarely associated with highly developed civilizations, the South Seas. In the Caroline Islands, Nan Matal, a city of massive and beautiful design, was built in a shallow lagoon between two islands. Stone blocks weighing tons were placed among the reefs in crisscross fashion, forming a solid foundation for houses, palaces, and temples. The city was surrounded by walls six feet thick and nearly thirty feet high.

Nan Matal is a dead city, but not a particularly old one. It was flourishing and still being completed less than a century ago when "the arrival of overzealous Christian missionaries resulted in the population . . . abandoning the city for the jungle." Mr. Cooper writes clearly if not inspiredly about his extensive globetrottings.



The book tends to be somewhat episodic, because it has no central theme and no logic of organization. But the material more than makes up for these deficiencies. It is impossible to see such sights, to explore the tombs and temples of times past, without being impressed—and the author succeeds in conveying his thoughts and feelings to the reader. The book is overpriced, which will not help its sales.

**MORPHOGENESIS: An Essay On Development.** By J. T. Bonner. *Princeton University Press*. \$5. "There is a sort of chauvinist pride among biologists . . . we like to think that there are some aspects of living organisms that are strictly ours and . . . far too subtle for the physicist and chemist to appreciate." This confession appears in the introduction to "Morphogenesis" (technical jargon for "the development of form") and, taken out of context, may be a bit misleading. Dr. John T. Bonner of Princeton University is not reviving vitalistic notions that dominated biology until relatively recent times. He does not regard life as a manifestation of supernatural forces, and recognizes that physics and chemistry must play a leading role in solving certain important problems. He simply believes that the research will have to be done by properly trained biologists—and his book presents evidence for this plausible point.

Dr. Bonner provides few new insights, but spotlights many areas where insight is required. Focussing on the problem of how living things group themselves into symmetrical patterns, he describes certain single-celled plants known as algae which align themselves into long filaments, dumbbell-shaped designs, squares, and rectangles. Other simple organisms colonize in three dimensions, forming perfect cubes; still others gather into zigzag structures that collapse and open up again like a carpenter's rule. Higher on the evolutionary scale, we have geese and Air Force pilots who fly in "V" formations for tactical reasons. Dr. Bonner includes many fascinating examples of things we would like to know more about and compares living creatures to crystals that form in "dead" inorganic matter. This book is highly recommended to laymen as well as scientists. It is a stimulating, splendidly written survey of biology's most crucial questions. —JOHN PFEIFFER.

## LITERARY I.Q. ANSWERS

1. whoop, from Scott: *The Lady of the Lake*.
2. twitters, from Henley: *Margaritae Sorori*.
3. crackling, from Ecclesiastes.
4. tinklings, from Gray: *Elegy*.
5. rattling, from T. S. Eliot: *Morning at the Window*.
6. whispering, from Hardy: *In Time of the Breaking of Nations*.
7. sputtered, from Whittier: *Snowbound*.
8. rustling, from Milton: *Il Penseroso*.
9. hisses, from Edith Sitwell: *Solo for Ear-trumpet*.
10. gabbled, from Goldsmith: *The Deserted Village*.
11. roar, from Arnold: *Dover Beach*.
12. buzzed, from Longfellow: *Hia-watha*.
13. squeal, from Shakespeare: *Hamlet*.
14. moaned, from Lowell: *Vision of Sir Launfal*.
15. lapping, from Tennyson: *Morte D'Arther*.