

Our New Revolution

AMERICA IN CRISIS. Edited by Daniel Aaron. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 363 pp. \$4.

By FOSTER RHEA DULLES

THIS book is a collection of fourteen essays written by as many authors and ably edited by Daniel Aaron. In spite of its title it does not deal with contemporary events, but is concerned with the response of the American people to earlier crises in their history. The project grew out of a series of lectures given at Bennington College in the winter of 1950-51 that were made possible through a grant from the Carnegie Corporation.

In an attempt to give as broad as possible a sampling of past experience, the definition of crisis has been rather widely stretched. There are discussions of the consequences of yellow fever epidemics and of the reaction of the world of art to the Armory Show of 1915, for example, as well as studies of the national response to threats to our peace and security from domestic upheaval or foreign entanglements. This wide diversity in the choice of topics reflects the sound conception that the significant turning points in American history are not necessarily political crises, but it must also be admitted that it tends to deprive the book as a whole of the basic unity that a somewhat different approach might have made possible.

It does not hold together as well as might be hoped also for another and perhaps more important reason. Authors approach their subjects from quite different points of view. Some of them are primarily concerned with the popular response to the events they describe; others are content to give little more than conventional accounts of rather well-known happenings. Nor is there any common standard, although this would perhaps be too much to expect, so far as either original research or fresh interpretation are concerned. The unevenness of the essays detracts from the book's overall effect.

Such general criticism, however, does not apply to many of the individual essays. Perry Miller has contributed a penetrating study—the first in the book—of the impact upon American society of the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century. C.

Foster Rhea Dulles is professor of history at Ohio State University and the author of "Labor in America," "Twentieth Century America," and other books.



—From "The Future in Perspective."

Poincaré and Wilson—"behind a barrage of high-minded principles."

Van Woodward's analysis of the effect of John Brown's raid on both the North and the South is a brilliant re-interpretation. The importance of measures to counteract erosion could hardly be more strongly brought out than in Paul B. Sears's account of dust storms. There is much of interest in Walter H. Hamilton's explanation of why the banks closed in the crisis of the great depression.

Although only three of the essays take up foreign affairs, they stand out both on their own merits and because of their relevancy for the present. In his analysis of the factors making for the imperialist movement at the close of the nineteenth century, Richard Hofstadter has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of that strange phenomenon which signalled America's emergence as a world power. Dexter Perkins discusses with moderation and good sense the reasons for our failure to join the League of Nations in 1919. The disillusioning effect of the Nazi-Soviet pact upon the writers of the 1930's—the final essay in the book—is very interestingly handled by Norman Holmes Pearson.

Even though the theme of response to crisis seems sometimes neglected, the evidence presented in this series of essays by and large does show, as Mr. Aaron suggests in his brief introduction, that while Americans have often reacted impatiently and emotionally on occasions which called for more sober judgment, they have also displayed courage and determination. And such qualities have enabled them to surmount every past threat to their freedom and security. By making this clear, "America in Crisis" has performed a very useful service even though it does not wholly fulfil the promise of its title. The national record it portrays is one which should bolster up a sometimes wavering faith in our ability to meet successfully today's vital challenges to our peace and freedom.

USA Notes

WILSON IN HIS OWN WORDS: Donald Day's attempt to discover the meaning of Woodrow Wilson's life and career through selections from his papers is scarcely fulfilled by the result, a volume he calls "Woodrow Wilson's Own Story" (Little, Brown, \$5). On the whole, Mr. Day's editorial comments are neither penetrating nor particularly useful. But this is, nevertheless, a handy collection of public and private statements strung out in chronological order, and thus in a sense is Wilson's own story. For those who have forgotten, or who never knew much about it, it will make interesting reading.

As autobiography, however, it is obviously quite faulty. Here are snatches of the personal correspondence, intimate, warm, enthusiastic, and longing. These are undoubtedly the most appealing sections of the book. Side by side and interlaced run more formal addresses, papers, and messages, which lack all the charm of the letters, however noble they may be in themselves.

It seems too bad that these public pronouncements should occupy so large a place in the final parts of the book. The figure of Wilson seems here to retire behind a barrage of high-minded principles and ill-fated exhortations. This was certainly all part of his later story, perhaps the most important part. —JOHN C. CAIRNS.

LABOR AND POLITICS: Five case histories about the impact and methods of the CIO in working with the Democratic Party in the 1950 local, state, and congressional elections are analyzed by Fay Calkins in "The CIO and the Democratic Party" (University of Chicago Press, \$4).

The author, for the past four years associated with the Industrial Relations Center of the University of Chicago, is research assistant for the National CIO-Political Action Committee and has been in a position to watch how the machinery works. Of the five cases, the unsuccessful Senatorial fight in Ohio against Senator Taft and the successful one in Michigan to elect Governor Williams are the most interesting. In Ohio, PAC built an independent political organization in support of the Democratic candidate Joseph Ferguson. In Michigan, PAC moved right into the Democratic party to take over control, with like-minded groups, and ousted the old-line Democrats. Miss Calkins argues that the problem of the citizen is not to eliminate pressure groups, "but to improve the quality of their competition within his party." —L. L. L. GOLDEN.

The Saturday Review



Editor, NORMAN COUSINS

Chairman, Editorial Board, HENRY SEIDEL CANBY

Chairman, Board of Directors, E. DEGOLYER

Associate Editors, AMY LOVEMAN, HARRISON SMITH, IRVING KOLODIN

Assistant Editor, ELOISE PERRY HAZARD

Feature Editor, ROLAND GELATT

Book Review Editor, RAYMOND WALTERS, JR.

Contributing Editors, JOHN MASON BROWN, BENNETT CERF, MARY GOULD DAVIS,
JAMES THRALL SOBY, HORACE SUTTON, JOHN T. WINTERICH

Publisher, J. R. COMINSKY

Associate Publisher, W. D. PATTERSON

Contents Copyrighted, 1952, by The Saturday Review Associates, Inc.

The Election: Must It Be All or Nothing?

THIS is written the day before the election. We report this fact only because it may be pertinent to point out that the topic of this editorial is in no way linked to what our feelings may be once the election returns are in. Our interest in this subject, in fact, was first expressed in these pages more than ten years ago.

What disturbs us is the all-or-nothing aspect of Presidential elections. This flatly contradicts the intent and theory of the Constitution makers.

It is possible that sixty million votes will be cast in the present election. It is further possible that only two million or so of those votes will determine the winner. The winner takes all, as is right in any system of majority rule. But the loser relinquishes all—not necessarily right in a democracy. The winner must represent all the people, but the loser is deprived even of the job of being official spokesman for the defeated party. He does not become leader of the opposition with a voice in Government.

Originally, the Constitution makers intended that the electors would vote only for President. The man receiving the second highest total of votes would become Vice President. This had the advantage of assuring the country that the man who came out second best in the elections not only would have a hand in the Government but would be able to step into the White House in the event of the President's death.

A serious flaw in this method became apparent in 1800 when Jefferson and Burr were tied in the electoral vote and the decision had to be made by the House of Representatives. This resulted in the Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution, which provided

that the electors would indicate their Presidential preference and Vice-Presidential preference on separate ballots.

The development of competing political parties has been another departure from the original approach emphasizing men rather than political groupings. Also, the electoral system has given way to popular voting although the states retain their individual electoral strength for tabulation purposes.

In the course of these changes, however, an important principle seems to have suffered. This is the principle that the leader of the opposition be given an official position where he can speak for his party. This principle has worked out well wherever it has been followed, particularly in Great Britain.

We are not urging a reversion to the original Constitutional design under which the defeated candidate would become Vice President. Obviously, the nation must be assured that the policies it has identified with the President will not be abandoned because of accidental Presidential succession. But the least that can be done is to give the defeated candidate a position in the Congress as Senator-at-large. He is the leader of his party and is entitled to a platform and a position in Congress—representing not any state or district but the electorate of his party as a whole.

Surely a man who is deemed worthy by 48 per cent of the voters to occupy the White House is at least entitled to one out of ninety-six votes in the nation's deliberative body. His presence in the Senate would be a happy departure from the all-or-nothing approach to our Presidential elections. This is not to say that the position of

Senator-at-large should be considered merely as a consolation prize to the loser; it can be a revitalizing and strengthening factor for the two-party system.

IT would be difficult to think of a Presidential election which could better illustrate the advantages of some such change than the present one. Apart from the importance of the campaign issues is the overriding need for a sense of unity to emerge from the election itself. The clawing and mauling of the past three months couldn't have come at a more inopportune time; but that was part of the inevitable price of free and regular elections. Unless a national sense of purpose emerges from this election, we may not be able to meet the mighty challenges to free government of which free elections are a part.

A further advantage is manifest in the persons of the present candidates. Adlai E. Stevenson had to withdraw as candidate for Governor of Illinois in order to campaign for the Presidency. In the event he is defeated for the Presidency, the nation should not be deprived of his high abilities in some responsible official position. Similarly, Dwight D. Eisenhower, who resigned from the Army, has contributed too heavily to the national safety in the past not to have an official voice in Government. In the present case, it is to be expected that the successful candidate would recognize the importance to the nation of utilizing the services of his defeated opponent; but the long-range interests of the nation would be better served perhaps if the position of the losing candidate were to be fixed by law.

It may be argued that establishing the position of Senator-at-large would deprive the Vice President of the privilege of breaking a tie vote, since the full complement of the Senate would then be an odd number. Even allowing for this possible complication, it does not seem to us sufficiently important to offset the multiple advantages that might accrue to our political system through better balanced representation.

—N. C.

