



NOT WHO, BUT WHY?



—Wide World.

By ELMO ROPER

I HAVE said repeatedly since 1940 that the chief function of public opinion polls, in an election year, is *not* to predict the winner. I still believe that. Moreover, I think election polling may be doing some harm which partially offsets the good they do. For example, I think Thomas E. Dewey was partially a victim of public-opinion polls in 1948. Assured by the polls, including ours, that he was a sure winner, his campaign during the last month was a relaxed and easy one. Some even felt it was so relaxed it didn't come to grips with the fundamental issues which were then bothering people. On the other side of the coin, the potential Dewey voters, assured by the polls their man was as good as elected, also relaxed—to the point where unknown millions of them didn't go to the polls. Result: a Truman election. It is not my purpose here to argue whether Truman's election was a good or bad thing for the country. It is my purpose to point out that one thing the polls were popularly supposed to be trying to measure—the election—was influenced by the measuring stick itself.

Moreover, I sometimes wonder if the political party—national or state—which is shown by the polls to be facing a particularly tough year can persuade their very best candidates to risk what looks like certain defeat by making the race.

But, good or bad, we have the polls with us and are likely to have for some time. One might fairly ask, if I think polls have unfortunate social possibilities, why does my organization do them? The answer is simple: I think the good they do outweighs the bad and I'm hopeful that ways will be found to still further minimize the potential harm. Nineteen hundred and forty-eight helped in this respect—political polls lost their aura of infallibility while at the same time not seriously reflecting on the ability of their blood brother, marketing research, to predict human feelings and intentions about commodities.

What are the good things election

polls do? Briefly, they gather a little additional evidence on *why* man behaves as he does. They gather a few more facts on man's behavior which are being added to the facts being gathered by anthropologists, sociologists, economists, political scientists, psychologists, and others—and all the facts may add up someday to an answer as to why, at times, man prefers bread to freedom, or domestic prosperity to international well being, or Eisenhower to Stevenson.

Let's illustrate this by some facts we have learned this year from our election polling.

Fifty-two per cent report that they have often gone to the polls with the intention of splitting their ticket—voting for a Republican for this office and a Democrat for that office. We know there is more of this ticket splitting in the Middle West than elsewhere (66 per cent against 35 per cent in the South, for example). But we know, too, that 11 per cent report that the very last time they wanted to, and firmly intended to split their ticket, they did not—mostly because they were not sure how to do it without running the risk of invalidating their entire ballot. We know, too, that this is not a phenomenon of people of lower education. Eight per cent of the people with less than a high-school education reported that the last time they wanted to split their ticket they did not but 12 per cent of the people with some college education reported precisely the same thing!

We know too that our national leaders have done such a good job of glorifying the one who votes that very few people willingly admit they don't vote—even though the most who ever voted in a national election was 1952's 63 per cent. But we know that there are indirect ways of making a pretty good estimate of who will actually vote and who probably won't—despite what they say. This year we have approached the all-important problem of turnout in a variety of ways: how *sure* is the person that he will vote?; what's his past voting record?; is he registered to vote or

has he lived in the district long enough to be entitled to vote?; how excited has he become about this particular election?; how *important* does he think it is that his candidate win over the other one?; how much difference does he think there is between the merits of the candidates? the two parties?

When all the answers to these questions are in it is perfectly clear to the analyst that fewer people actually will vote than say they will. But just which questions will yield the truest measure of actual voting behavior is the \$64,000 question—and that's where human judgments must decide until we have built up a greater body of reliable data. It's not just a matter of *how many* will vote, but which candidate or which party will get out supporters in the greatest ratio.

As things look, as this is being written, it seems unlikely that the November 5 vote will exceed 1952's record of 63 per cent by very much, if any. It could well go lower. Of course, something may happen in the last two weeks of October or even the first week in November to step up interest, but, if we have measured today's probable turnout correctly the student of politics will have no trouble at all in pointing to *what* caused the upturn—and something new will have been added to the sum total of human knowledge about why man behaves as he does.

WHAT else have we learned about probable turnout? That, as of early October, a relatively larger percentage of Eisenhower supporters gave every indication of voting than of Stevenson supporters. More of them think there is a *great* difference in favor of their candidate; fewer think "both are good men and it doesn't make too much difference to the country which one wins." More of them think Eisenhower will bring peace; that he knows best how to handle foreign affairs; keep corruption out of government.

Perhaps the most important thing is that more people have *confidence* in Eisenhower the man than in Stevenson the man. When asked to choose from a list of phrases, the ones they thought were particularly appropriate for each man, 44 per cent selected "have confidence in" for Eisenhower as against 19 per cent for Stevenson.

So, when we apply our *best judgment* as to what would have happened if the election had been held in early October instead of early November we come up with these figures: 52 per cent of the people we judge as likely to vote said they preferred Eisenhower; 43 per cent preferred

Stevenson and the balance, 5 per cent, were undecided. Moreover, the Eisenhower lead was even greater than this in the very populous Northeastern part of the country.

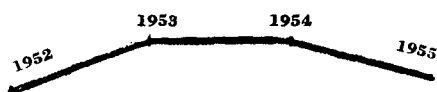
All of this is not to say that the situation is hopeless for Stevenson. We have learned other facts, too. More people think Stevenson would have the interest of the common man at heart. How much difference in voting this will make when the "common man" is doing very well indeed remains to be seen. More people think Stevenson would see to it that farmers get an even break. That could spell an upset in the normally Republican Midwest. More people say they intend to vote for Democratic Governors and Senators and Congressmen than Republican. But we know that roughly 11 per cent of those who intend to split their tickets won't do so. Does that mean that in Illinois Eisenhower will carry Dirksen through, or will Dirksen cut Ike down—or will there be some of both?

In any event the two facts we have learned are helpful to future analysts of the political scene: People, as of mid-October, wanted a Republican President, a Democratic governor, and a Democratic Congress. But since a good many potential ticket-splitters will end up voting a straight ticket, somebody will get some votes he didn't deserve!

What else have we learned this

year? That the contest is between Eisenhower and the Democratic Party. When we asked people *why* they chose whichever candidate they chose very few Eisenhower supporters gave as their reason that he represented the Republican Party. In fact, 62 per cent of the Republicans we interviewed said they would be voting primarily for the man, while only 42 per cent of the Democrats said that the man, rather than the party, would have the greatest influence on their decision in November. The facts developed by our research are clear; in a personal popularity contest with Stevenson Eisenhower would win. In a "confidence in party" contest with the Democrats the Republicans would lose. Moreover, it is clear that, with a majority of voters it is neither one; it is a much-liked Eisenhower vs. a well-respected Democratic Party led by a perfectly acceptable representative of that party.

There is every evidence that the popularity curve of Eisenhower runs something like this—



In other words, he has lost strength from his 1953-54 high. In many groups he has lost strength even from his 1952 vote. Here is a tabulation that is significant:

	Per cent of decided vote favoring Republicans in:	
	Sept. 1956 %	Oct. 1952 %
REPUBLICANS NOW STRONGER THAN DEMOCRATS—		
And Republicans have gained:		
In the Northeast	62	58
And show no significant change:		
Among people fifty years and older	60	61
In towns and cities 2,500 to 1 million	53	54
And Republicans have lost:		
Among the prosperous	64	75
Among the white collar workers	60	65
Among the small businessmen	58	63
In the Midwest	57	63
Among women	56	58
Among middle income group	55	57
Among farmers' wives	53	59
In towns under 2,500 population	53	58
Among men	52	55
	Per cent of decided vote favoring Democrats in:	
	Sept. 1956 %	Oct. 1952 %
DEMOCRATS NOW STRONGER THAN REPUBLICANS—		
And Democrats have gained:		
Among farmers	55	36
Among Catholics	52	48
And show no significant change:		
Among union members	62	62
Among low income voters	55	56
In the South	54	55
And Democrats have lost:		
Among the Jews	67	76
Among the Negroes	56	72
In cities of over 1 million population	52	55

Some of these figures need comment. The largest electoral vote blocs are in the Northeast and few candidates win without some large part of the Northeast. The strong Republican hold on the Midwest which began after Roosevelt's second term is now far less strong. While the Democrats are no stronger in the South than they were in 1952, the lack of organized and respectable leadership against the Democratic candidate may make the final vote different.

What else have we learned? That "group voting" as usually understood is rare or non-existent. For example, most political commentators have reported that "union labor will probably go Democratic." What does that mean? According to our polls that means a little more than one out of every three union members will vote Republican. What about the "Catholic vote"? Either candidate will be lucky if he gets more than eleven out of every twenty Catholic voters. What about the "rich man's vote"? For every two rich men who vote for Eisenhower there will be one who votes for Stevenson. In short, if either candidate shows what political commentators will call "overwhelming strength" among any group, he will get only two out of every three voters in that group—and there will be very few groups where the division isn't much closer than that.

Before Election Day we'll publish our final figures on candidate preference, including the per cent who were undecided at the time of final interviewing. We will show what our best judgment indicates to be the probable turnout. If anyone wants to use those as a basis for estimating the election results he will be using what is, in my opinion, the best tool developed thus far. It is not yet a perfect tool.

If our final figures, showing candidate preference as late as a week before election, are closely approximated on Election Day we may be heroes to some newspaper editors. If not we'll be Bums—despite the fact that these editors are warned that a sick or very tired-looking Eisenhower on TV Sunday night could switch 5,000,000 votes and despite the fact that we told them that, at the present time, only human judgments can be applied against the real problem—how many will vote and which side will get out the biggest per cent of its potential.

Fortunately, the students of human behavior are kinder. The data on man's behavior is so meager they are grateful for the little bit extra the election polls provide. Maybe that's reward enough. *



SR's Book of the Week:

"THE TRIBE THAT LOST ITS HEAD"

Author: *Nicholas Monsarrat*

By JOSEPH HITREC

AT FIRST sight it may seem like a far cry from "The Cruel Sea" to "The Tribe That Lost Its Head" (Sloane, \$4.95)—between the accessible and familiar theme of individual courage under the stress of war in the earlier novel, and the probing of deep and hazardous bush of tropical colonialism that is the subject of Nicholas Monsarrat's latest work of fiction. But the faithful can relax at once. This is still the cool skipper of "The Cruel Sea" proceeding full steam ahead, in spell-binding command of a yarn that is fast, solid, and generates the excitement of a tropic hurricane.

Mr. Monsarrat's gift for reducing a distant scene to something cozily near at hand is turned to vivid account in his imaginary protectorate of Pharamaul, a large "pear shaped" island off the west coast of Africa. Pharamaul is administered by England's "Scheduled Territories Office" and is the home of the Maula tribe, a dark-colored people only lately risen from primitive savagery. Not a little of the author's skill is devoted to making Pharamaul a cameo of the historic function of colonialism, which is to say a native territory with one foot still in the bush and the other in the twentieth century, where the precarious balance is being watched over by a paternal and just white government personified in a handful of devoted, sometimes unimaginative but always well-meaning civil servants. The balance, Mr. Monsarrat suggests, is so fragile that anyone inclined to upset it ought to pause and think hard first.

When young Dinamaula, schooled in England at the expense of the British taxpayer, returns to Pharamaul to be installed as the hereditary chief of the Maulas, the sun-boiled peace of the island is cracked for the first time in a generation. The young chief talks unguardedly to a visiting reporter and the interview is sensationally misquoted in the London press. Questions are asked in Parliament and the anti-British element the world over gloats intolerably. But the real danger begins when the backwash of publicity hits Pharamaul it-

self and stirs the Maulas to unrest and violence. The outnumbered civil servants toil to arrest the upheaval, but their actions follow the inevitable pattern of "too little, too late." Their specialized logic dictates that young Dinamaula be whisked away before the trouble can crystallize around him. Yet the balance has already been destroyed and the island erupts in an orgy of savagery, a St. Bartholomew Night of blood, rape, and cannibalistic horror that calls up the memory of Mau-Mau and is without parallel in recent fiction.

THIS is a frugal outline, of course—Mr. Monsarrat does incomparably better in 200,000 words. The episodic development of the story is smooth, deftly modulated, and expert throughout. While weaving together the lives and emotions of a score of people,

and sometimes indulging in a swatch of local patterns and color, it never forgets its purpose of easing the reader toward the final, climactic situation. Its characters come in all colors and ages, but the author sees to it that they pose no identification problem. Mr. Monsarrat's sympathy with the colonial problems of this age is resolved in a plea for more understanding and patience, and this is tempered with a strong admiration for the luckless few who have to live with them and cope with them. He suggested that the civil servants are working against long and difficult odds and they should at least be entitled to the benefit of doubt in any judgment of their competence and achievement. "No theory, good or bad, would wave a wand and conjure up sufficient gold to keep each Maula man, woman, and child in affluence forever; no wizard would grant them parliamentary franchise and a seat at U.N. The gold might be stumbled upon, a hundred years from now, by a man looking for something else; Pharamaul might conceivably be heard in the councils of the world, on some federal basis, in A.D. 2200. Such was the pace of Africa, and in the meantime, there was a garden to be cultivated, with the tools that were to hand."



THE AUTHOR: With a half-finished novel, a portable typewriter, and slim savings, Nicholas John Turney Monsarrat a quarter of a century ago turned his back on the law books and wills waiting to be drawn up in his uncle's Nottingham law office and disappeared into a London slum in pursuit of a romantic idea. Until the outbreak of World War II he lived in the lonely world of the creative artist—years he characterized as "hard, hungry, and shabby. They were also productive and supremely happy," especially since he got four novels off his chest—

novels that dealt with love, a subject about which he admitted knowing nothing—and a play, "The Visitors," that starred Greer Garson but folded quickly and quietly. During five distinguished years with the Royal Navy, Monsarrat rose to lieutenant commander in charge of ships on convoy escort duty in the U-boat-infested Atlantic, and had enough energy left over to write several factual books about naval operations. Out of the service and back to his journalist war-bride Philippa Crosby and the '31 portable, he wrote his first attention-getting novel "Leave Cancelled," a realistic account of the brief honeymoon of a British officer and his bride that caused one squirming American reviewer to say, "I felt damned embarrassed." The title of his next volume, "Depends on What You Mean by Love," was aimed squarely at moralizing critics and included in addition to his "Leave Cancelled" two stories about Londoners' love for their city and sailors' love for their ships. Needing to put distance between himself and the sea before he could work on his novel "The Cruel Sea," which firmly established his reputation, Monsarrat found both distance and perspective in South Africa's Johannesburg. There he became director of the United Kingdom's Information Office. As a sensitive novelist, Monsarrat was deeply impressed by the Dark Continent, its people, and seething emotions; but again he needed perspective which he found with his wife and son in Ottawa, Canada, before he could revisit Africa through his latest novel. Monsarrat now is in New York to attend its American publication and to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the coming of the romantic notions that first led him to writing.

—SIEGFRIED MANDEL.