

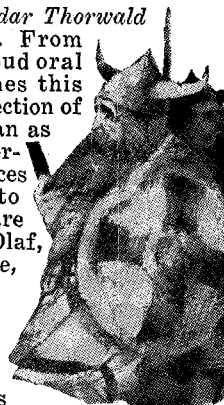
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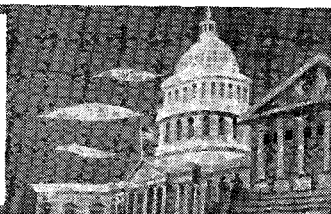
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State of Affairs



LONDON.

A MEMBER of Britain's new Labor Government who had just moved into his official residence confided to me the other day that he had decided to hold on to his old, modest, little apartment. "Who knows," he mused, "how long I will have this new place at my disposal. . . ?"

The remark is indicative of the uncertainty that prevails within the Labor Government. The narrow election victory was disappointing, but the desperate battle to preserve the value of the pound caused a profound shock among the still overconfident Laborites. It was a battle far grimmer than Prime Minister Harold Wilson had expected, and not even he can yet fathom all its bitter consequences.

The gaily lit garlands strung across Oxford and Regent streets, the enticing shop windows, the throngs of shoppers, the crowded theaters and night clubs — all belie the gravity of the economic crisis that has come to haunt Britain and the Labor Government. In 1958 the Suez crisis exposed Britain's military weakness and Great Britain thereafter ceased in the eyes of the world to be a great power. The crisis of the pound sterling last month exposed a chronic weakness of Britain's economy and put into doubt Britain's ability to continue as the world's banker and holder of a "reserve currency." The United States and several of the financially strong governments in Western Europe promptly came to the rescue of the pound sterling when Britain's own gold reserves proved inadequate to halt the run on it. They acted swiftly and in unison, fearing that the collapse of the pound could cause the collapse of the precariously balanced world currency system. The United States particularly, as holder of the second "reserve currency," was fearful that the sterling crisis could also drag the dollar toward devaluation.

Monetary battles are silent and bloodless, the communiqués unintelligible to the average man. But the repercussions are world-wide and their full impact is felt only months later when it hits the pocket of the ordinary citizen. This has not yet happened in Britain. The pound was saved. But the underlying problems persist and present the Prime Minister with nothing to look forward to but unpleasant alternatives.

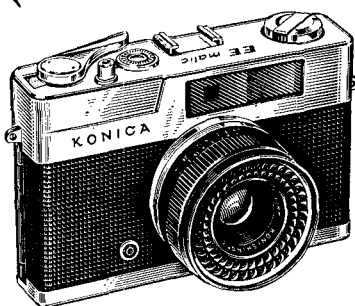
There is, first of all, the nagging fact that the Labor Government will remain

under constant and careful scrutiny by the central bankers of the world, who represent the opposite end of the political spectrum. And they must be listened to and taken into serious account because by next March the British Government may want to ask for a renewal of these credits just at the time when it will be presenting its first regular budget. The Labor Government is committed to more public spending for social welfare and also to heavier taxation — a formula of which central bankers generally do not approve. Even worse, the new credit restrictions in Britain may well produce unemployment — which was virtually nonexistent under the Conservative Government. And if the threat of unemployment becomes plain, even the trade unions will immediately turn against the Labor Government by refusing to cooperate in the bold plan it is preparing for what is called an "incomes policy." This boils down to the acceptance on the part of industry and the trade unions of a plan for tying increases in wages, profits, and prices to the actual growth in productivity. But they may in fact go so far as to claim that because the Labor Government is failing their interests, they must look after themselves and go against the plan.

I AM thus convinced that, should unemployment threaten, the Labor Government will not wait until the situation deteriorates but will call for another election next spring, putting the blame for the economic mess squarely on the last Conservative Government. There is some justification for such a claim. The Conservatives were well aware that the balance-of-payments situation was declining but did not dare to act because they were reluctant to make moves that would force people to realize how false the then-current prosperity was. The Labor Government, once in power, was obliged to deal at once with the grave balance-of-payments problem they had inherited, but the manner they applied was so clumsy that they made the task that much more difficult for themselves. Brazenly they told the world the unvarnished truth about Britain's financial position, and as soon as it was realized that the emperor wore no clothes, the flight from the pound was on. And when, compounding the blunders, the government made several additional technical and psychological mistakes, there was

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nothing for it but to resort to the most extreme steps to save a pound.

The betting among both Labor and Conservative politicians is that if there are to be new elections next spring the Labor Party, in spite of its many errors in the short time it has been in power, will again win. Many people who voted Labor in the last elections not because they are resolute socialists but from boredom and dissatisfaction with the Conservatives told me that they would probably vote Labor again because the government should be given a fair run to show what it can do. Moreover, Harold Wilson, in spite of his stumbles so far, has succeeded in creating the image of a strong leader while the Conservative Party, on the other hand, gives a picture of disarray.

Several Conservative leaders privately confessed that they do not expect to overthrow the Labor Government; despite its narrow majority they see themselves out of office for the next four to six years. Thus if Mr. Wilson does call for another election before the consequences of the pound crisis are felt among the workers and middle-classes, he is likely to be returned by a larger majority that would give him more time and elbow room to deal with the grave long-term problems underlying the economic crisis—the reluctance of industry and labor to modernize themselves, to be more competitive, and to concentrate harder on exports rather than on the home market.

Whether these are the central reasons for Britain's economic crisis or whether the reasons go deeper will be known only in time. Mr. Wilson made it clear during his recent visit to Washington that he would cut various defense expenditures, but at the same time he left no doubt that he wanted to preserve what is left of Britain's responsibilities east of Suez. He has proved in various ways that he is just as empire-minded as the conservatives, just as anxious to preserve the value of the pound and Britain's role as the world's banker. Whether Britain's resources are sufficient to live up to these expectations, whether the pound crisis was an ominous warning that it cannot live up to them, only the future can tell us.

Meanwhile the mood in London is a curious mixture of hope and disillusionment—hope that the Labor Government will succeed in pulling the country out of its present mess, disillusionment at how badly it has done so far.

—HENRY BRANDON.



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The President's Most Powerful Tool

A Chief Executive's main strength lies in his leadership of public opinion.

Here a professor of political science examines the varieties of that leadership.

By ELMER E. CORNWELL, JR.

IT IS the office of the Presidency that makes American democracy unique in the democratic world. It has been the Presidency, more than any other part of the system, that has enabled American democracy to succeed and flourish for a century and three quarters. And it has been the relationship between President and public that has given this office its power and importance.

Sweeping assertions? Yes, but defensible—if not provable in an ultimate sense. The uniqueness of the Presidential institution in a world of free nations that have most often followed the British cabinet model is obvious, and hardly less so in light of de Gaulle's assumed role under the Fifth French Republic. That the Presidency has made the constitutional system workable is perhaps less obvious but can be persuasively argued in light of the roles played by Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, and the Roosevelts.

But why insist that the President's key relationship is with the public rather than with his party or with Congress? Popular government by definition entails close links between governors and governed, whatever the constitutional forms. Likewise all freely elected officials must cherish their popular base of support. In a very real sense, however, the American President finds in the populace not only his base of electoral support but the very essence of his power to influence the process of governance. Were he the British Prime Minister and were American parties like British parties, Presi-

dents could govern as party leaders. But American parties have rarely lent themselves to anything approaching "party government."

The separation of powers and the constitutional allocation of legislative authority to Congress shape the President's relation with that body. Save for the veto, the occupant of the White House has no means of either setting major policy himself or forcing the Legislative branch to do his bidding. Apparently the framers did not intend the chief magistrate to be a policymaker except in crisis situations. The leverage the President has acquired in the lawmaking process has been indirect, based on use of the arts of persuasion, and ultimately grounded in the popular support he can claim or mobilize. Hence his link with the public is his key relationship.

THE President, in the nature of things, must deal with the citizenry largely through the media of communication, and the impact of the revolution in communications on the Presidential office during the present century has obviously been tremendous. Presidents have found in the mass circulation daily newspaper, radio broadcasting, and, recently, television unprecedented channels for exerting leadership of opinion in the making of national policy. But not only does the Chief Executive now have the technical means to reach his clientele with an ease and rapidity unknown in the last century; he has also achieved an omnipresence in the general flow of news and in the awareness of the average citizen which in itself has vast implications for the shaping both of national opinion and of public policy.

The role of the President as leader of national opinion, as it has evolved during the first six decades of the twentieth century, is clearly a permanent feature

of the office and of the American political scene. This role, however, invites two sharply contradictory interpretations. Some will ask, especially in the light of the Kennedy (and Johnson) success in harnessing television: Does not the White House now have available an array of communications techniques of limitless and even frightening potential? Have contemporary Presidents perhaps become dangerously powerful, as channels for manipulating the public have opened up to them?

On the other hand, a case can certainly be made that, short of an overriding crisis, Presidents need more than publicity techniques to overcome the enormous frictions in the American political system. The legislative accomplishments of the Kennedy Administration seem meager indeed when measured against the amount of effort and virtuosity expended to obtain them. The real question may therefore turn out to be: Is the President's power and capacity to influence events likely to be equal to the ever-increasing demands being made upon him?

The one thing that has emerged clearly, whatever its ultimate significance, is the pre-eminent ability of the Chief Executive to generate publicity and to command public attention. Both his interpretation of the potential of the office and his natural reserve caused President Kennedy to modulate somewhat his use of the enormous publicity power of the White House. But the breezy and uninhibited Texan who succeeded him has apparently felt no compulsion to keep the danger of overexposure continually in mind, with results that come out graphically in the following from *Time*:

In the course of a single breathtaking, nerveshaking, totally implausible

Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., is chairman of the Department of Political Science at Brown University. This article is adapted from his forthcoming *Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion*, which will be published later this month by the Indiana University Press.