

Hoover Can Not Be Elected

By Elliott Thurston

EXAGGERATION is expected of politicians and circus barkers. The customers like it, look for it and are so accustomed to it that precise advertising of a candidate or of a side-show curiosity would arouse instant suspicion. The show does not have to come up to specifications. As long as the clientele senses some resemblance between the promises and the performance, nobody feels cheated. Once, however, the customer concludes that he has been duped, he will demand his money back and take his trade elsewhere.

Mr. Hoover's best friends agree that he was badly oversold at the peak of an inflationary period and that the subsequent decline in values has made the contrast between the advertising that went with him and what he has been able to deliver, conspicuous to the point of painfulness. That the customers are walking out and transferring their patronage to Mr. Hoover's competitors is amply evident from a number of developments, not the least of which are the past two elections.

Offhand, the man who is told that Mr. Hoover can't be elected in 1932 assumes that this is just the usual exaggeration. He doesn't believe it, nor does he disbelieve it. He will wait and see. If he is a lifelong Democrat he will have that fatalistic sense of impending doom bred of many disappointments. If he is a lifelong Republican he will have that faith in the future or in the proverbial self-annihilating genius of the Democrats, bred of past successes in the face of unpromising prospects.

However, those comparatively few Republicans and Democrats who have examined the case somewhat more clinically agree that it will take something approximating a political miracle to save Mr. Hoover. By all the criteria available eleven months before the election he will be the worst-beaten President in history.

Having set down these pronouncements it is advisable to hedge at once. If the corner around which prosperity is supposed to be lurking can be discov-

ered, and prosperity can be reproduced, visible to the eye, quickly enough, the voters may forget and forgive. If the Democrats get embroiled again in a Kilkenny cat affair it is possible for them to destroy themselves. Otherwise Mr. Hoover is done for, judging his case on the present record, the ascertainable state of public opinion and historical precedent.



The reasons for the collapse of Mr. Hoover's political prospects, which were bright enough to be dazzling in 1928, are numerous and some of them are difficult to state without appearing prejudiced or vindictive. The foremost reason is, of course, the major panic. Administrations have survived minor but not major panics. Mr. Hoover was not to blame for the depression, but as the late Dwight Morrow said during his New Jersey campaign a party which takes credit for the rain must bear the blame for the drought. If ever a candidate took credit for the agreeable precipitations of the Gilt Edge Era, Mr. Hoover did. His campaign speeches of 1928, reread to-day, reveal how blindly confident Mr. Hoover was of a more or less perpetual bull market.

Only a man totally unaware of the forces at work to make a mockery of his prosperity promises would have offered so complete a guarantee for the future. An experienced politician knowing that promises should be offset with provisos would have left some loophole. Mr. Hoover left none. Elect him and the nation was sure of high wages, boom times, fat dividends. Elect Smith and all was lost. Mr. Hoover's appeal was unblushingly to the pocket-book. Page advertisements appearing in the metropolitan press declared:

"Republican efficiency has filled the working-man's dinner pail—and his gasoline tank besides—made telephone, radio and sanitary plumbing stand-

ard household equipment. And placed the whole nation in the silk-stockings class.

"Republican prosperity has reduced hours and increased earning capacity, silenced discontent, put the proverbial 'chicken in every pot.' And a car in every backyard, to boot.

"Wages, dividends, progress and prosperity say, 'Vote for Hoover!'"

Mr. Hoover's speeches were filled with much the same thing—a "job for every man" and "poverty will be banished." "The slogan of progress is changing from the full dinner pail to the full garage," Mr. Hoover told his New York audience on October 22, 1928.

"A continuation of the policies of the Republican party is fundamentally necessary to the further advancement of this progress and to the further building up of this prosperity," he added.

To resurrect these generous promises now seems almost ghoulis. They belong to the past. It is like having one's adolescent love missives read aloud when one has reached a soberer middle age. Democrats in the coming campaign will deliver Mr. Hoover's speeches of the 1928 campaign—only in a different tone of voice.

For political parties which promise prosperity, then fail to make delivery, there is no alibi. The silences which enshroud Republican National Headquarters prove it. It is too late to bring in the "If's" now. Had Mr. Hoover qualified in 1928 sufficiently to say that he would continue prosperity if world-wide conditions permitted, there would be logic now in the refrain "It's not our fault." Mr. Hoover made no qualifications. He was sure that the world was in for a great wave of prosperity.

"With the assurance of peace for many years to come," he told a Boston audience, on October 15, 1928, "the world is upon the threshold of great commercial expansion. The other great nations of the world have been slowly recovering from the war. They have attained a very large degree of economic stability."

"Security and steady employment," he added, shifting his prophetic gaze back to America, "are more assured than for a long time past."

To plead now that Mr. Hoover's credit pools, his moratorium, his energizing of relief-fund agencies, have cushioned the shock, prevented things from being worse than they are, is not sufficient. The voter who was promised high wages, or dividends, and is now out of a job, or has had his wages, sal-

ary or dividends slashed is in no mood to accept pleas in extenuation when he was categorically and unequivocally guaranteed articles which have not been delivered—could not be delivered, of course. But that was Mr. Hoover's lookout.

However many great minds were fooled in 1928 about the future, it is not sufficient to say, as the Republican National Committee said recently, that there were other false prophets. Mr. Hoover had permitted himself to be advertised as the master mind, the superman, the engineering genius who had grappled successfully with the biggest, hardest problems in modern times.



"Governments and technicians," said Mr. Hoover's campaign advertisements of 1928, "grew to know him as the handy man, whose mental monkey wrenches never failed an emergency."

These things are cited in no mean spirit but to emphasize how completely Mr. Hoover committed himself. Are voters in 1932 going to judge Mr. Hoover by his promises and the performance? History answers that they are. They always have. The elections of 1930 and 1931 show it. There is no escaping that meaning in the enormous overturns of popular sentiment in every part of the country. Exceptional men, like Mr. Morrow, were able to win as Republicans, or Republicans were able to win in some of their strongholds, not in all of them. Otherwise the mortality among Republicans has exceeded anything in this century. Those who stood on platforms supporting the Hoover Administration suffered the most crushing defeats.

But Mr. Hoover's political weakness goes farther than his failure to make good on the impossible promises of 1928. The aura of greatness has been destroyed. The Republican National Committee itself has been pleading that Mr. Hoover is no magician, that he cannot be expected to pull rabbits out of hats. The trouble is that Mr. Hoover was advertised as a miracle man. It is too late to go back on the advertising matter now. The illusion should never have been created.

Not only is the illusion shattered but Mr. Hoover, who never was a party man and never has had the genuine enthusiastic support or sympathy of party men, has inevitably lost caste in his own political household. Politicians are not more kindly than

other self-seekers, even if politicians become emotional or kiss babies. The politicians in his party who have their own skins to save sense impending disaster, not only to Mr. Hoover—which is merely incidental to them—but to themselves. Mr. Hoover will drag them down to defeat. They behave, therefore, in a variety of ways. Some of them break openly with him, like the insurgents of the West. Others waver. Others are sullen. Few show the same degree of deference toward Mr. Hoover that they exhibited when he was a boon and not a handicap to them.



Even the badly defeated Mr. Taft had the genuine affection of Old Guard leaders. They had no feeling of cold hostility toward him such as numerous Republicans exhibit toward Mr. Hoover. Mr. Hoover's lack of defenders and champions in the Senate last winter, when he was accused even of brutal indifference to human suffering, was a shocking revelation of his political isolation. The same coldness, when it is not active dislike, has spread to the press. Except for a few favorites who cling to the White House or the Rapidan camp, Mr. Hoover has scarcely a friend or defender among the hundreds of working newspaper men of Washington.

Nor has he many champions left among newspapers. One of his most caustic and constant critics is a great chain of newspapers which supported him in 1928. The Hearst newspapers have turned upon him with ferocity. The Western press berates him for the collapse of his Farm Board and promised relief for the agrarians. The Eastern press castigates him for his attitude on prohibition. The Southern defectionists long ago reverted to their antebellum (1928) status. The Southern press presents a united front against him.

Books, anonymous and avowed, denying him even some slight residuum of virtue, have flourished abundantly, and have been read avidly by the public. Mr. Hoover's one consolation from some of them has been that no mortal could possibly be as depraved as they try to make him out. Everywhere his real or alleged faults and failings are advertised where three years ago men who arose to express a doubt that he was a latter-day Solomon were put down as blind partisans.

His champions and defenders are few and scattered. Some of them adopt the fatal tone of apology. Others are paralyzed by the load of adversities which weigh upon the Administration or by fear of public animosity. Above all, Mr. Hoover has made a bad showing in pleading his own case or causes. And even his 1928 campaign advertisements said: "His pen is trained for blueprints, not speeches." He has shown temper against individuals, as against the Navy League president, who accused him of "abysmal ignorance." But he has not shown fight. He has been against repeal or modification, but he has not been willing to crusade for prohibition. The combative spirit makes enemies, but it also makes friends. Mr. Hoover's neutrality makes him too negative to suit either side in an argument. And these are argumentative times.

Everywhere the blight of the depression has doomed his plans and mocked his words. His confident predictions just after the market crash that all would soon be well turned to ashes as the disaster spread. His war-debts moratorium proved too meagre a remedy for the German economic disorder. His Farm Board, violating his own principles against price-fixing, squandered millions, only to be snowed under as the wheat and cotton avalanche rolled over it. His Wickersham Commission, ending a heckled career on a note of inexplicable contradiction between what it thought and what it recommended, fell a victim to the public's scornful temper. The tariff bill, which was to restore America's foreign trade in sixty days, according to Senator Watson's calculations, ushered in new debacles. The list is long. Everywhere the deadly touch of the depression has mangled Mr. Hoover's programme, and cost him public confidence and support.



The extent of the tide which was running against Mr. Hoover less than two years after he entered the White House can be measured mathematically by the 1930 elections. He had polled 21,392,190 votes against Smith's 15,016,443 in 1928, a majority for Mr. Hoover of 6,375,747. In 1930, 7,715,402 votes shifted from the Republican to the Democratic column, enough, had the overturn taken place in 1928, to have elected Smith, assuming a corresponding shift in electoral votes. The 1931 elec-

tions reflected an even stronger anti-Administration drift.

For those who believe in omens, the 1930 elections foredoomed Mr. Hoover. They cost him control of the House, though to be sure the margin is narrow. That has always been a sure-fire portent of disaster to an incumbent party. Republican loss of the House in 1875 may, it is true, be considered an exception, since Hayes landed in the White House, but Tilden had a majority of the popular vote and all true Jeffersonians contend that the requisite electoral vote was stolen. Republican loss of the House in 1882 was the prelude to Cleveland's first victory two years later. When the Democrats lost the House in 1894 it heralded McKinley's election in 1896. Again the augury foretold Taft's defeat in 1912, after losing House control in 1910. So if history repeats itself the omen of 1930 foreshadows the eclipse of Mr. Hoover in 1932.

Much, of course, depends upon whether the Democrats nominate Owen Young, Newton Baker, Melvin Traylor, or Governor Ritchie, to name the eminent wets most acceptable to the conservative East, or whether they nominate Governor Roosevelt, who is not conservative enough to be acceptable to "big business," not too wet to ruffle the South, and sufficiently suggestive of his illustrious relative to seem enticing to the West.

To dodge the dilemma of guessing who will be the Democratic nominee, imagine that through some terrific emotional upheaval Calvin Coolidge should turn Democrat and come out against the Anti-Saloon League. Could he beat Mr. Hoover? It is one of the most persuasive proofs of the low ebb in Mr. Hoover's political fortunes that throughout his party the clamor has gone up to "Draft Coolidge." Why? Because of the seemingly universal notion that Mr. Coolidge could be overwhelmingly elected against all comers. This rather pathetic faith in Mr. Coolidge's infallibility springs apparently from the psychology of success which surrounds him as definitely as the opposite engulfs Mr. Hoover.

Where, then, is Mr. Hoover going to get his votes in 1932? After the wet inundation of 1930 and 1931 in the East and Middle West, can the dry Mr. Hoover hope to win in these all-important areas against a wet Democrat? That the Democrats will nominate a wet is a foregone conclusion.

Will New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, Connecticut, Massachusetts

and Rhode Island, which have exhibited all the symptoms of public rebellion against the existing prohibition order, vote next year for the dry Mr. Hoover against a wet Democrat? Add to these states only the Solid South, and the Democrat who carries them will have 276 electoral votes in 1932, no more than enough to elect him President. That the South is again solidly Democratic is a fair and inescapable deduction after the rout of Bishop Cannon and his collaborators in 1930.

If Mr. Hoover cannot win in the big wet states of the East or in the now repentant South, where can he turn for votes in 1932 except to the West? And what an alluring scene the surplus-blighted West presents for a President who has broken with all the Western insurgents (excepting Mr. Borah, who cannot be broken with in presidential years), and with the reviving remnants of Bull Moose-La Follette expeditions of the past, who are gazing fondly at Gifford Pinchot and Hiram Johnson!



Box the political compass to-day and at each point the vista for Mr. Hoover is one of evil omens, ominous mathematical counts, party discords, or sulkings, or of closed banks, bread lines, apple vendors, sheriff's sales and similar unpleasant phenomena, which, viewed by the Democrats, have one common redeeming feature not perceptible to the eye of Mr. Hoover.

It is a venerable saying that twenty-four hours is a lifetime in politics. Hence any political crystal-gazing renders the gazer vulnerable, not to say fatuous. The meteorologist whose barometric readings tell him to set out hurricane warnings may be mistaken. If so, he can always blame it on the caprices of Nature. His science remains unimpugned. All readings on the political barometer indicate hurricane warnings. The not-so-exact science of politics is not to be discredited if acts of God, one-dollar wheat, a new bull market or other caprices of divine or human nature suddenly clear the political skies.

Barring some such, now unpredictable, new precipitation of manna, Mr. Hoover's only hope is that the Democrats will make some politically ruinous mistakes. And as a distinguished, veteran Republican recently remarked: "Have we left them any?"

Footnotes to a Happy Marriage

Anonymous

Here is news. An articulate woman admits she is happily married. And it seems simple enough after you read her rules for success.

HAPPY marriage is undramatic material. It hasn't been mentioned in newspaper or novel in a dog's age. Presumably it is either a forgotten subject or the last word has been said. You either have it and preserve a golden silence, or you haven't it and institute proceedings.

Having made, my husband and I, a glowing five-year success of a marriage for which most of my friends predicted certain failure (they declared "you can't build a dove cote on top of a volcano"), I have reviewed the notes we have set down from time to time along the way, and present them as a feeble voice in the din caused by the howling of the discontented.



With the removal of much that made marriage difficult and hypocritical for our grandparents, with science supposedly aiding us in the sex relation, with complete frankness possible in conversation, with a nearer parity of the sexes, and many other improvements that have been inaugurated since the war, really happy and satisfying marriages should be sprouting all over the place. However, the official divorce figures are appalling and when we made some statistics on our own friends we found that only two couples in ten presented a picture of undisturbed bliss. We didn't count the ones that live in "co-operative antagonism," but there may be some brands of happiness that go unrecognized. Even so, the malcontents and the divorcees dot the landscape like daisies in a field. Divorce is as fashionable as appendicitis used to be.

The maddening thing is that, according to our modern values, a happy marriage is not smart. It is considered distinctly bourgeois and is not one of the ideals of youth. It rates at least third on the

list of the young person's ambitions, money and a good time topping it.

My husband says: "No one thinks he or she is going to be happy in marriage, these days. That's the main trouble."

I disagree with him. Few people embark on marriage with anything but happiness in their minds. They do not, however, regard this marital felicity as the fragile plant it usually is, which must be protected and worked for and thought about and carefully nourished and cherished. I suggest that the proper train of thought for a newlywed is this: "Nothing shall damage or disturb this thing that my husband and I have set up. No third person shall be allowed to tamper with it, no happening, even adultery, shall undermine it. It is a beautiful and living thing and we will keep it safe no matter what happens."

Does this sound sentimental and ultra-optimistic? I suppose so, but it is certainly a better pre-nuptial thought than the too usual "Well, if I get tired of Bill I can always go to Reno," or "If Jimmy doesn't behave himself, I'll go straight home to mother." There is the sixteen-year-old who informed her mother that she wanted to marry young so she would have time to be married twice. It is this frame of mind that jeopardizes the whole relation from the start, and the entire blame cannot be laid at the foot of matrimony itself when the participants sign the contract with no intention of keeping it.

I would like to proselytize for a fifty-year plan of matrimony. I want children to be brought up to believe that a beautiful and successful marriage is the real goal in life and that there is nothing more worth while in the span of time that stretches ahead of them.

I told Doctor Parks, the international author-