

The Republican Presidential Candidates

If any one inquires why I discuss Republican presidential candidates instead of those of my own party, I answer, first, that more Republicans have announced their candidacy and second, that it is less embarrassing to discuss Republican than Democratic candidates.

There are certain general principles that must be observed in considering anyone's candidacy. The first is that availability is not always synonymous with merit; that is, one man may be much more deserving generally than another and yet less available as a candidate. Success in politics may be described as the conjunction of preparedness and opportunity. Many may be prepared and have no opportunity; some may have opportunity and yet not be prepared to take advantage of it. Circumstances—circumstances beyond control of the individual—may play a very important part. One man may be especially fitted for the presidency in time of war while another may be much better fitted for a presidential term in time of peace. In comparing the candidates, therefore, I mean no reflection upon those whom I may think less available. They may be, in some cases, superior to those who are especially available at this time.

It is no special compliment to the Republican party to say it has a multitude of men who are qualified to fill the presidential chair. In a membership of more than seven million it ought to be possible to find an almost unlimited number, who possess the qualifications necessary for the discharge of the high duties of this great office, but most of them, being unknown, are unavailable—each may be "a gem of purest ray serene" but hidden in unfathomed political caves.

The leading Republican candidate, so far, is General Leonard Wood. The straw votes give him first place and he is the only candidate who has received the endorsement of a State. Whether he will be allowed to represent the soldier element alone or will find a competitor in General Pershing, is yet to be seen. It would not be surprising if these two men should finally become active competitors for the vote of those who are inclined to a military candidate. Circumstances accentuate the differences between them; General Pershing received the military opportunity that General Wood coveted. The former will rest his claim upon what he DID accomplish, while the latter will build upon what he MIGHT have accomplished, thus giving wings to imagination. They are not only rivals from a military standpoint but they appeal to different elements in the party. General Wood is residual legatee of former President Roosevelt, while General Pershing, being the son-in-law of Senator Warren, will naturally be more acceptable to the stand-pat element.

But is this the time for a military candidate? The war is over and the establishment of the League of Nations looks to the prevention of war in the future. The conditions are not such as demand a military candidate; on the contrary, a military leader would seem out of place whether we consider the world at large or our domestic problems. The League of Nations is an American idea and rests upon what our country has already accomplished in the direction of peace. The nomination of a military man at such a time would raise a question as to our pacific intentions; it would indicate a feeling at home incompatible with the world's hope of peace. Men of equal honesty are liable to be moulded by their environment, and the environment of a soldier would make him deal with international questions in a soldierly way rather than with a view to avoiding war. His influence might be decisive against peace methods at critical moments. As illustrative of this danger, we need only to recall the fact that the military representatives of the United States, at the last Peace Conference at the Hague, threw the influence of this nation against excluding poisonous gas from the legitimate weapons of war.

A military man in the White House would be even more unfit for domestic policies. The triumph of the democratic idea in the war can not fail to give an impetus to the popularizing of our own government, and a professional soldier, however democratic in principle, would naturally lean toward arbitrary methods in government. The difference between a Democrat and an Aristocrat is not a difference in honesty

or in moral purpose, but rather a difference in methods; the Democrat, having faith in the people, is willing to trust them to run their own government, while an Aristocrat, lacking faith in the people, thinks he is rendering the people a service when he withholds from them the means by which they might (in their judgment) injure themselves. The military system is aristocratic instead of democratic; power comes down from the man above, not up from those below. In a government like ours, persuasion is the method more and more employed, whereas in the army the officer in authority commands and does not permit questioning. A professional soldier at the head of the government would chill the growing enthusiasm in favor of putting the people in complete control of their own government.

The labor question will be one of the prominent issues in the campaign, not some particular branch of the labor question, but the far-reaching and continuous struggle of the laboring man for the betterment of his condition. The soldier is always brought into a labor dispute by the capitalistic side and his sympathies are naturally with that class. However honest he may be, he can not put himself in the wage-earner's place and consider the question from that point of view.

The first big question for the Republican party to decide, therefore, is whether they will commit the party to the leadership of a professional soldier or seek a civilian leader. They have a number of civilian candidates to choose from but these represent opposite elements.

Governor Lowden of Illinois belongs to the reactionary crowd; he was in the convention of 1912, at Chicago, and actively enlisted on the Taft side; he can hardly expect support from the Progressives. His identification with the Pullman company gives to the corporate element in the country a sufficient guarantee as to his conservatism.

Senator Harding represents the same element and will divide the reactionary strength with Governor Lowden, (except that portion that follows General Pershing in case of his candidacy.) Senator Harding is a more able man, with a considerable amount of political experience and one of the best campaigners his party has produced in recent years. He presided over the last Republican Convention and has been one of his party's leaders in the Senate ever since he entered that body. The Republicans may be afraid to nominate a man so openly connected with Wall Street as Governor Lowden; if so, they will naturally turn to Senator Harding who will, doubtless, be as satisfactory to them although his corporate connection may not be as easily proven as Governor Lowden's.

The progressive element of the party has two candidates, Senator Johnson and Senator Poindexter. The former is better known than the latter because he was vice-president on the ticket with Mr. Roosevelt eight years ago, but that very fact would tend to prejudice him in the eyes of the stand-pat element of the party. His nomination would be even more clearly a progressive victory than the nomination of General Wood. Then, too, Senator Johnson is handicapped by his opposition to the League of Nations. The Republican convention could not endorse his position and he would be compelled to run upon a platform which, by its silence if not by its language, would condemn his course.

Senator Poindexter is, to a lesser degree, embarrassed like Senator Johnson by his fight against the treaty and could hardly be expected to poll as large percentage of the Progressive vote, although this is partially offset by the fact that he is not as a shining mark for reactionaries.

Gov. Coolidge is also mentioned, although the inclination seems to be to attach him to other booms as the second man on the ticket. He may be drawn into the higher circle if the fight between the leaders becomes bitter enough, but he does not yet embody a plan or a program. If all the policemen in the United States strike between now and the convention and any party takes a position that makes the strike question the paramount issue, he may become the logical candidate, but, if as seems entirely possible the next election turns on other issues, he may have to qualify by showing some connection with the questions before the country. No party is likely to send its candidate out to sea this year with sealed instructions.

I do not know whether the candidacy of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler is sufficiently advanced to justify one in including his name, but rather than subject myself to the charge of overlooking than subject myself to the charge of overlooking a semi-dark horse, I herewith enter his name in

the list. I will not venture to estimate his chances until he announces his platform of principles. He differs from the other candidates in that he is likely to appeal strongly to the more scholarly element of the Republican party. In fact, it is only reasonable to suppose that the Wilson Republicans—those who were drawn to the President by his prominence in educational circles and by his methods of thought—would find in Dr. Butler the best reflection of their views.

There is time yet for other entries but the lines are so clearly drawn that I venture to make a guess. First, that neither General Wood nor General Pershing will be able to control a majority of the Republican delegates. The opposition to militarism will be sufficient to defeat both, even if the rivalry between them was not sufficient to enable each one to prevent the nomination of the other.

When we come to the civilian candidates, we find that the gulf between the two reactionaries, Lowden and Harding, on the one side and, the two Progressives, Johnson and Poindexter on the other, too wide to permit the nomination of a conspicuous representative of either side. The Republican party wants to win; the passion for victory is greater than devotion to any particular man, and when the progressives and reactionaries find that neither side will consent to an outstanding representative of the other side, both sides will begin looking for a compromise candidate, and the logic of the situation seems likely to point to some man as Governor Sproul. The reactionaries are always talking about a business man for President and Governor Sproul represents that element rather than the politicians. They will, of course, have to have a man sound on the prohibition question and Governor Sproul made his campaign on that issue and led the fight in the state for prohibition. The Republican party must have a man in favor of woman's suffrage also and here, too, they will find Governor Sproul is all they could desire. They will have to have a man with some progressive tendencies in order to make him acceptable to the Western progressives. Governor Sproul has qualified in this respect by opposing Senator Penrose and by the advocacy of some reforms. An Eastern progressive will be more acceptable to the reactionaries than a Western progressive, and an Eastern progressive will also be more acceptable to the Western progressive than a Western reactionary.

All roads lead to some man of the Sproul type and Governor Sproul has another element of strength that is not to be overlooked. Senator Penrose has climbed as high as he can hope to go; he would not be thought of as a candidate for president, but it may be assumed that he wants to stay in the Senate. Governor Sproul is more than a mere danger, he is a positive menace to Penrose, and the senator would much rather have him for president than for a successor. When it is remembered that Senator Penrose is the most potential single factor in the Republican party it will be seen that his personal interest in removing Governor Sproul from the list of rivals may become an important factor in a close contest.

This is the situation as it appears to me today but it will not embarrass me in the least if conditions so change as to compel me to revise my estimate as to relative strength. I can view the situation as impartially as I did the contest between Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt. I was then in a position to certify to the truth of what each said about the other, and so, today, it does not embarrass me to point out to each of the Republican candidates the weakness of his competitors.

Being more interested in my country's welfare than in mere party success, I hope for the nomination of a Republican who will, if elected, make a good president. Therefore, I would like to see Senator Kenyon nominated—a man whose sympathies are with the people, and who might be expected to support with his influence all remedial measures. But, as the reactionary element has a dominating influence in the councils of the Republican party, it is unlikely that they will choose such a standard bearer, unless the leaders become frightened by the new parties that are coming into existence.

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The fact that none of the lawyers employed by the liquor interests to find an opening in the national prohibition legislation have become discouraged enough to throw up their jobs would indicate that the whisky-makers are not so close to bankruptcy as might be imagined from what one reads.