

As Editors See It

THE GREAT REFERENDUM

The magnitude of the nation's verdict against Wilsonism is so tremendous as to be almost beyond ordinary comprehension; like the statistics of the great war, or the measurements of interstellar spaces. It will be an aid to appreciation of it, however, to compare or to contrast it with former electoral results, some of which were regarded as overwhelming.

In the twenty-four presidential elections preceding this one in which the popular vote could be counted, twelve presidents were chosen by minorities of that vote, and twelve by majorities. Three of the former did not even have pluralities, namely, John Quincy Adams, Rutherford B. Hayes, and Benjamin Harrison. Jackson had majorities of 139,212 in 1828 and 157,313 in 1832. Van Buren had only 27,027. Harrison, in the famous log cabin and hard cider campaign, secured a majority of 145,914. Polk, the first "dark horse," won by a plurality of 38,181, but was in a decided minority of the whole vote. Taylor, with a plurality of 139,556, was also a minority president. Pierce had a plurality of 214,694, by far the largest thus far, and also a clear majority; due to the decadence of the whig party. Buchanan had a plurality of 496,905 over Fremont, but was in a decided minority of the whole.

The first Republican president, Lincoln, had a plurality of 489,495, but was a minority president. In his second election, however, he had a majority of 494,567; by far the most overwhelming victory thus far on record. Grant had only 305,456 plurality in 1868, but a majority of all, and in 1872 his plurality over Greeley was 726,991. There followed five minority presidents. Hayes did not have even a plurality, falling 150,935 short of it. Garfield's plurality was only 9,464; Cleveland's 23,005. Harrison fell 95,713 short of getting even a plurality. Cleveland for his second term had 363,612 plurality—a landslide, it was considered—but was still in the minority. McKinley in 1896 had 567,692 plurality, and in 1900, 860,788; and both times clear majorities. Roosevelt in 1904 eclipsed all records with a plurality of 2,544,343, and of course an immense majority; and Taft in 1908 did nearly half as well with a plurality of 1,269,806. Wilson was both times a minority president, in 1912 being in a small minority, though he had a plurality, due to the Republican split, of 2,123,188. In 1916 his plurality was 581,941.

By the side of these Mr. Harding's plurality which appears to approximate 7,000,000, stands in a class of its own. Allowing for the virtual doubling of the electorate by the enfranchisement of women, it still far exceeds even Colonel Roosevelt's figures in 1904. It amounts to nearly seven per cent of the entire population, and to 20 to 22 per cent of the entire electorate. In many important states his plurality equals ten per cent of the entire population. Moreover, it was won in a straight, uncomplicated fight. There were no states out of the union or under military rule, as in 1864, 1868, and 1872. There was no such adoption of an outside candidate as in 1872. There was no such excitement over a strenuous personality as in 1904. There was no schism of the opposing party as in 1912; no such campaign of camouflage as in 1916. There was just the direct issue: For or against Wilsonism. On that the nation delivered the greatest referendum ever known in the history of the world.

The electoral vote, while completely overwhelming, is for obvious reasons less impressive and is no more decisive than on some other occasions. Mr. Wilson in 1912 had 435 votes to 96 for the other two candidates. Roosevelt in 1904 had 336 to 140. Grant in 1872 had 206 against 53, and in 1868 he had 214 against 71. Lincoln in 1864 had the greatest preponderance on record, 212 to 21, or fully ten to one. Pierce had 254 to 42. Harrison beat Van Buren by 234 to 60. Jackson in 1832 had 219 to 67. Some of the earlier divisions were even more striking, but the method of election was then so different from the present that comparison would be irrelevant. After all it was a referendum, a plebiscite, a popular vote, that the president wanted, and it was that which he had cast against him with a numerical emphasis never

before known in American political history.—Harvey's Weekly.

THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP

Much talk is heard already about a new Democratic leadership. At the San Francisco convention there were only two real contenders for President Wilson's mantle. One was Mr. McAdoo, who was looked for by his supporters to maintain the Wilson tradition in the Democratic as well as in the foreign field. Like his father-in-law, Mr. McAdoo was a southerner born, transplanted to the middle states. He seemed, therefore, to have the habits of mind required to weld together the two clashing elements in the Democratic party.

His successful rival was Governor Cox, a northern Democrat, whose career had been shaped along the lines traveled by most of the successful leaders of that school. He was alert and liberal-minded enough on local issues to be elected governor three times in a naturally Republican state. He was in a class with Governors Johnson of Minnesota, Pattison of Pennsylvania and Horace Boies of Iowa. Yet his point of view was narrow and his political instincts allied him with the northern machine elements. He was classed as a "wet" and as a friend of the old-line organizations in the big states—Tammany's here, Mr. Nugent's in New Jersey, Roger Sullivan's and Brennan's in Illinois, Taggart's in Indiana and the Boston crowd in Massachusetts.

Cox was nominated by a combination of these groups, who wanted to register a protest against the Wilson leadership. But no sooner was he nominated than he cut away from them. He went to Washington and made his peace with the President. Next came his "dry" speeches in the west. He finally based his campaign on issues which turned every northern state, three of the "our border states and two of the southern states against him. He was beaten worse than Parker was.

After Parker's defeat William J. Bryan "came back." McAdoo is probably now planning a "come-back" as the representative of Wilsonism. On domestic questions he has been a "dry," inclined to train with Mr. Gompers and to favor government operation of the railroads and similar ventures. In his home state he is outside the Tammany fold and is elsewhere recognized as naturally disposed to radicalism.

The election marked a vigorous reaction from such tendencies. Mr. McAdoo has, therefore, little political capital left to work on. He was a bad forecaster, except, perhaps, in so far as he manifested a certain distrust of the value of a Democratic presidential nomination in 1920. The only Democratic leader who realized the party's predicament and told the truth about it was Colonel Bryan. His judgment was magnificently vindicated. But that may not have endeared the other losers.

McAdoo, Cox and Bryan are about the only figures now on the Democratic horizon. But the nominee in 1924 is likely to be some one out of the limelight or whom chance brings conspicuously to the front in the 1922 elections.—New York Tribune.

BRYAN PROPOSES IMMEDIATE CHANGE

The Hon. William J. Bryan who for twenty-four years has held his place as the foremost personality in the Democratic party, made an interesting suggestion last month. He proposed that President Wilson should promptly resign. This act would make Vice-President Marshall President without a moment's delay, and with no other formality except the oath of office. Mr. Marshall, in turn (as suggested by Bryan), could at once appoint Senator Harding Secretary of State and himself retire from the presidency. Under the existing law of succession, the Secretary of State would become President for the remainder of the unexpired term. The out-going congress has a working Republican majority in the House with a bare majority in the Senate. The proposals made by Mr. Bryan could be adopted without the slightest difficulty.—In fact, they would be vastly easier to put into effect than the installation of a new Prime Minister in France, a thing that has happened at least twice a year on the average during the past half

century. It is not merely curious, but quite instructive, that Mr. Bryan's suggestion should have been so generally regarded as fantastic. It is perfectly just to say, without reflection upon any individual, that an office once gained in this country is regarded as a personal perquisite, and to be retained, either for its power or for its emoluments, or both, as long as possible. It is not a welcome thought that the country must continue to endure the deadlock between congress and the White House until noon on the fourth day of next March. Mr. Harding, of course, would naturally prefer the delay on various accounts; but it is a bad system that makes the delay possible.

These are not whimsical observations, nor are they intended in the slightest degree as reflections upon Mr. Wilson. It is the system itself that we are discussing. It would be only frank to observe in passing that the opinion has been and remains widespread throughout the country that Mr. Wilson's serious and protracted illness has definitely shown us the reasons why the founders of the government provided for a vice president. The American presidency is the most arduous office in the world, and its duties are too taxing even for men in vigorous health. It is utterly contrary to American precedents, however, for anybody to resign from high office. The few exceptions merely go to prove the rule. It is the system itself that should be changed. But for the bother of presidential elections, a two-year term with eligibility limited to three consecutive terms—a total six-year period—would be wholly desirable; and in any case, whether terms be longer or shorter, the laws should provide for the prompt retirement of a President after the election of his successor. That the country would endorse such a change cannot be doubted. Steps should be taken promptly.—The American Review of Reviews.

THREE MONTHS OF GESTURES

This is taken from a news story published in Monday's Star:

"Senator Lodge expressed regret that new administration is to be delayed three months. It is unfortunate, he said, that the change in administration and in congress should have to wait so long a time after the people have expressed themselves at the polls. He said he would approve a change in the law of the land which would make the newly elected President and congress take office early in January."

The Massachusetts senator should move to bring the change about. He would be well employed and well supported.

The delay in such circumstances as now exist makes for embarrassment and temporary paralysis. Observe. A president and congress have just been chosen on the principles enunciated in the Chicago platform. Out of respect to the people, legislation should be drafted and appointments to office made on those lines.

And yet President Wilson will enjoy the right of recommending legislation and making appointments to office till March 4, and is utterly opposed to the principles laid down in the triumphant platform. He cannot be expected to go counter to his own convictions, and the present congress, in agreement politically with the one that will succeed it, cannot be expected to accept his recommendations or appointments made after his repudiation by the people and on the eve of his retirement from office.

So between now and the inauguration of the new order we shall have principally gestures. Not until Mr. Harding takes hold and the new congress begins to function will the path be clear for the advance the voters at their latest opportunity have decreed.—Washington Star.

DEMOCRATIC DUTY

In an interview given yesterday, former Senator Lewis of Illinois said something—if a slang phrase is permissible, said a mouthful. Take this:

"The Democrats must do everything to help President Harding's administration carry out the policies voted by the people. The democracy must be patriotic, not party idiotic. We cannot do against Harding that which we condemned the Senate Republicans for doing against Wilson. We would earn the contempt of public opinion."

The President asked for "a solemn referendum" on the league of nations. That is to say, he asked for an indorsement of his administration on the treaty of peace signed by him in