

KU KLUX KLAN SHOWS POLITICAL POWER IN INDIANA VOTE

Wild and Woolly Time In Politics

Activity of Ku Klux Threatens to Obscure More Vital Issues, Sullivan Says.

Beveridge Was Victim

By MARK SULLIVAN.

One of the influences that will affect the election next year is the Ku Klux Klan. It is not necessary to infer that the Klan as a nationwide organization can or will try to throw its influence in favor of one of the presidential candidates against the other. There is practically no probability that the personal plank in either platform might lead to the giving of occasion to this kind of prejudiced discrimination. It is conceivable that the platform of one party or the other may contain a plank either denouncing the Ku Klux Klan specifically or denouncing the kind of thing it stands for. Such a plank in either platform might lead to the lining up of the adherents of the Klan one way and those who disapprove the Klan the other way. But it is not necessary to anticipate this sort of thing. Quite aside from anything like this, the Klan will undoubtedly figure largely, sometimes the republican platform and sometimes on the democratic side, in local elections for congressman and senator. Some of the states in which the Klan is particularly powerful are doubtful ones. Indiana, for example.

In Indiana last year the Klan was partly responsible for defeating one of the best men who ran for the senate in any state that year, namely, Albert J. Beveridge. It was not that the Klan disapproved of Beveridge. Nothing in Beveridge's record or associations incurred their prejudice. They had nothing against him. If the election had been held over again next year the Klan would as readily have voted in favor of Beveridge. What the Klan happened to do was a haphazard fluke. But, combined with other things, it was just enough to defeat Beveridge.

The circumstances were these: Just few days before the election Gov. Henry J. Allen of Kansas, an old progressive party associate of Beveridge, came into Indiana to deliver some speeches in Beveridge's behalf. It happened that only a little while before Allen, as governor of Kansas, had denounced the Klan, using the vigorous language of which he is capable, in the same manner in which the other governors and other public men have expressed their disapproval of the menace to some fundamental American conceptions of government involved in the Klan's activities. It just happened also that the particular Indiana towns where Governor Allen was booked for his speeches were in which the Klan had recently organized and had secured considerable bodies of adherents. In these Indiana speeches Governor Allen again denounced the Klan, taking it as one of his topics, just as he took up other public matters then current.

The immediate reaction of the Klan members in these communities was to take the first opportunity to show their resentment. As often happens when action is determined by a temporary emotion the expression of resentment was erratic. They wanted to vent their resentment against Allen's speech on somebody and they took it all vicariously on Beveridge. It was all quite without relevance to Beveridge or any issue with which Beveridge was associated. But the thing happened so close to the election that it was impossible to overcome its effect.

In the elections next year there will undoubtedly be cases like this and other cases worse—cases in which the Klan will deliberately and avowedly vote as a body against some candidates and in favor of others.

All this is as unfortunate as possible. The activity of the Klan, its very existence—and, let us not omit to add, the things, some real and some imagined, which give rise to those prejudices on which the Klan thrives—all this constitutes one of the least happy and distinctive features of present-day American life. Where the situation raised by the existence and activity of the Klan is clear, where it is a simple issue between the Klan and the fundamental organization of our democracy, there is no duty on the part of the conscientious citizen except to put his voice and his vote on the anti-Klan side. And yet, if you find any good man who is a member of the Klan or an advocate of it or an apologist for it—and in some communities you can find good men who either are members of the Klan or have sympathy for some of its principles—if you talk to such a man and if you practice toward him the spirit of toleration which we all demand he shall practice toward the rest of us, you will be led to feel that it would be useful to make an experiment in frankness and clarification.

It is clearly wise to accord to such men the spirit of toleration we demand from them. If they are in any degree intolerant of the best and distinctive features of our democracy, it is tolerance. Clearly the most of the newspapers and magazines, as well as most others which have discussed the Klan at all, have gone at it rather too hammer-and-tongs. The fact that the Klan has gone on and grown is some proof of that. It is proof also, or at least it suggests that there may be something vital and appealing somewhere in an institution which has been able to survive such severe onslaughts from the outside, as well as such obviously detestable conditions as there have been in some parts of its own organization.

If you talk to a man who tends to be sympathetic with the Klan, or at least who is moved to refrain from outright denunciation of it, he will tell you that, stated broadly, one of its main purposes is to maintain

Banquet of Union Outfitting Company Employees



More than 100 officials and employees of the Union Outfitting company were entertained at a "get-acquainted" banquet Thursday night. Musio and vaudeville sketches were

presented during the dinner, after which speakers reviewed the store's growth in a period of 35 years. Principal speaker was C. E. Corey of the Corey-McKenzie Printing company.

Henry Rosenthal, vice president of the Union Outfitting company, spoke briefly, David Levine, general manager of the company, was toastmaster.

Those laws which the members of the Klan think ought to be passed, from many angles this episode, though small in itself, is illustrative. I suspect that the majority of native Americans have almost as much pride in these old American names, long and honorably prominent in our country's history, and in the American traditions with which they are identified as do the bearers of the names themselves. One may be permitted to guess that this Kabotshnick episode did not help much toward suppressing the Ku Klux Klan. Indeed, any one familiar with the resourcefulness and ingenuity of the salesmen might assume that those agents who sell membership in the Klan at so many dollars commission per membership passed these clippings in their prospectuses as, to use the vernacular of salesmanship, "a fine selling point," and counted it a good day.

If some of the principles and many of the practices of the Klan were not so clearly of a sort that they cannot be countenanced with safety to democracy and the orderly process of law—and possibly not negligently listened with some patience to the Klan sympathizer who argues that a man who wishes to impress his ideas on the community has as much right to organize a group who believe with him as any other citizen has to start a newspaper or to organize a good government league or to make himself head of the local precinct republican committee.

It is quite true that there is always a field beyond the field of statute law, a field of common custom and commonly held beliefs, in which there is recognized propriety in organizing for political action or otherwise for the informal expression of widely held standards about the conduct of men in their relation to others, for the maintenance of traditions, for a kind of informal censorship or approval any sort of conduct that is repugnant to the community generally.

But when the Klan sympathizer argues this way the obvious answer lies in two aspects of the Klan which are not common to other organizations that aim to organize a good community. One is the secrecy; the other is the wearing of the hood, the covering of the face. As to the latter, the honest Klan member tries to explain that it is immaterial, that it was one of the devices of the old Klan of 50 years ago in the south to impress the ignorant or superstitious negro, and that this feature of the ritual just happened to be taken over with the rest by the organizers of the present Klan. But the fact is, the wearing of the hood is material in practically all those present local activities of the new Klans which are illegal and not to be condoned. It is the wearing of the hood that helps individuals and local Klans to commit crimes with the minimum danger of detection. It is the wearing of the hood that enables individuals and groups to use the cover of the Klan for the prosecution of private vendettas.

When that Kabotshnick family in Philadelphia, having a wholly legitimate desire to honor their name to a form easier for Americans to understand and spell, honored the Cabot family of Boston by asking the court to let them assume that an ancient Boston name it was, as reported in the newspapers at the time, an observable and possibly not negligently significant phenomenon of present American life that the court dismissed the objections of the Cabots (or rather the objections of the Society of Sons of the Revolution, for apparently it was this old American institution, and not merely the Cabot family, which set up the objections in court). Also it was observed that the reaction of the newspapers in the eastern cities took the form of humorous jibing at the Cabot family. One wondered, in the first place, whether the Kabotshnick might not have been at one and the same time more considerate of the rights of others and more conscious of self-respect in themselves if they had spelled it with a "K." More deeply than this, one wonders what may have been the reflection of a good many Americans on the decision of the court, and especially on the attitude of the newspapers—whether these reflections may have included the thought that perhaps the newspapers and other institutions of the larger eastern cities reflect on those cities and are prevalently alien more truly than they express pride in American traditions. Since the action of the court presumably was determined by the law—or more accurately possibly by the absence of a law covering the situation—perhaps the kind of man who sees some justification for the Klan reflected that some law-making bodies, out of deference to the presence of bodies of alien voters, fail to pass precisely

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In all that is said here there is no intention to deal with the essential principles of the Klan nor with the men at the head of it. Some of them may be good men; some others of them may be decidedly otherwise. One of the early organizers of the Klan was a rather venerable old fellow who in his vague-minded, narrow-minded, long-haired way had motives entirely sincere and completely unworthy. One of the others who had a good deal to do with the energetic spreading of the Klan appears to have been a decidedly less attractive type—in fact, the Klan has been appearing in the papers pretty frequently in rather markedly odious connections. All that however, is a different story. The present article does not concern itself with the leaders of the Klan, nor with its methods of organization, nor with those men—frequently very commercial-minded, one is compelled to suspect—who make money through the organized selling of memberships in the Klan, who practice what has been called the commercial exploitation of hate. All that, let it be repeated, is another story. The present article has in mind only the individuals who join the Klan—and only some of them. Some who join the Klan do so because they see in it an opportunity for the prosecution of private feuds in an illegal and odious way. Some join it in a spirit nothing short of the most deplorable bigotry. If we are to make any headway through dealing with this widespread prejudice in a spirit of calmness and tolerance, it is good that men who join it are good men with motives that are sincere, even exalted. The writer has been told by sources which compel him to believe it that in many local communities, especially in the south and west, the very best men in the community belong to the Klan. And it is with the attitude of mind of this sort of man that the present article deals.

Such a man in the course of any long conversation with you will tell you, and will easily convince you, that his motives personally are at least unselfish. The salesmen of memberships and those who organize the salesmen and direct them may be in it partly or wholly for the commissions they earn and the various financial "rake-offs" incident to the commercial side of the organization. But the good man who pays his money to these salesmen is obviously quite without any selfish motive. Such a man indeed will tell you, and will marshal a certain amount of proof, that among all the organized forces now aiming to have influence in American politics the Ku Klux Klan is almost alone in having no selfish material object. He will tell you that the object of the Klan, for example, is to get more money for its members in the shape of higher prices for crops, government credit and the like. He will tell you that the purpose of the labor unions in trying to exert political pressure is to get higher wages. He will tell you that even the American Legion has among the objects of its political action a cash bonus for its members. He will cite other similar examples until you find yourself almost tending to admit that among all these blood and organized minorities the two which have conspicuously an impersonal motive free from material considerations are the Ku Klux Klan and the Anti-Saloon League. In this, as in any similar broad generalization, there is, of course, a certain amount of specious half-truth.

Nothing of this kind should blind any one to the fact that some of the principles of the Klan are inconsistent with the American theory of democracy and government, and the fact that some of the actions of some of its local groups are even more concretely odious. The important point is that to the degree that honest men with good motives are attracted by some aspects of the Klan they should be provided by the political parties, by the newspapers, by the courts and legislatures and by the other more orthodox vehicles for the expression of organized opinion with less excuse for taking to this kind of group action in order to get consideration for those of their purposes that are legitimate.

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