

State and Federal Elections

SHOULD we elect our Governors when we elect our Presidents? Or, should we elect our Governors in other years when we choose public officers of no greater importance? Those alternatives have been before the voters of New Jersey, and they have voted by a large majority against putting Presidential and the gubernatorial elections always at the same time. These alternatives are now before the voters of the State of New York.

In New Jersey the term of the Governor is for three years. Consequently, once every twelve years the election for Governor coincides with the election of a President. Otherwise not. In New York the term of Governor is for two years. In every Presidential election a Governor is elected, but a Governor is also elected in intervening years.

At first, the argument for keeping the election for Governor separate from the election of President seems most convincing. It is generally acknowledged that in municipal elections the voters should not be confused by other than municipal issues, and therefore the municipal elections should take place by themselves. The same process of reasoning would seem to point to State elections separate from those for Federal officers. Within its own sphere, the State, according to our theory of government, is sovereign; it is the State which exercises most of the governmental jurisdiction over individuals. It is the State which defines most crime, prosecutes the accused, and punishes the convicted. It is the State which creates municipalities and corporations; it is the State, in brief, which performs most of those functions of government which are regarded by other peoples as belonging to the Nation. When the people of New York select their Legislature or their Governor, they are doing most of what the people of England do when they choose their Parliament and indirectly their Government. It therefore would seem to be of the utmost importance that the people of the State should be able to give their undivided attention to the selection of the Governor and those who are to serve at the same time with him in legislative or executive office. It is notorious, however, that during a Presidential election the people of most of the States have their minds focused, not on their several State governments, but upon the Capitol and the White

House at Washington. If, therefore, the people of a State are to consider State issues apart from National issues, they should have for the purpose a State election at a separate time. This, in brief, is the argument, a very strong argument, for keeping State and Federal elections separate. But there is another side to be considered.

If democracy as it has developed into representative government in the United States should break down, it would be largely because of the indifference of the mass of the voters. Nothing can create such indifference more effectually than a sense of futility. If the voters once get the idea that politics is confusing, complicated, and more or less meaningless, they will turn their minds to other matters—to their business, to their pleasures, to anything but Government. The surest way to create that sense of confusion and futility in the minds of the voters is by the multiplication of elections and of the number of offices which the voters are called upon to fill. A great mass of people cannot be kept in a continued state of interest in any one subject. They must feel that the questions before them are simple, fundamental, and important. Otherwise, they will not pay attention to them. They will let those questions be decided by those of their number who have a taste for public life. This is the reason for the falling off of the proportion of voters in the elections during what are commonly called "off years." The one time when voters are most ready to go to the polls, most ready to give their thought to public questions, most concerned with the questions of government, is when a President is to be elected. It is easier for a man once in four years to give his thought to all the public questions that are likely to come before him than it is for him to give every year or two part of his attention to part of those questions. It is notorious that in the so-called "off years" the vote that is cast largely consists of those upon whom the party politicians can depend. Multiply the elections, and you enhance the power of the party leaders. Every movement for less frequent elections and for a shorter ballot has been pushed against the influence of the bosses.

The real choice, therefore, seems to be between the danger of confusing the voter by having too many kinds of ques-

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tions at one time and the danger of confusing the voter by calling upon him too many times to make decisions. Are the voters more likely to think clearly when they are called to the polls often on separate questions or when they are called to the polls less frequently and then asked to review both State and Federal issues?

From the point of view of party responsibility, there are also two sides to the question.

Our National parties are really composed each of forty-eight State parties. There is a vast difference between the Democratic Party of North Carolina and the Democratic Party of New York City. There is also an equally great difference between the Republican Party of Oregon and the Republican Party of Philadelphia. The question, therefore, arises whether independent voting and at the same time party responsibility may not be increased by separating Federal and State elections. On the other hand, just because of the differences between the States will not the responsibility of the National party be increased and independence in National voting be promoted by bringing State and Federal issues up side by side and calling upon the voters to distinguish between them, voting one way on their State tickets and another way on their Federal ticket?

In New York and New Jersey, where this question has been brought before the voters, the Democratic organizations have in general favored the separation of the elections and the Republican organizations have favored their union. This is natural. The Democrats are more likely to win their elections in the off years, the Republicans in the Presidential years. To strong partisans these facts seem important, but they ought to be ignored by the ordinary voter. The real question is what is going ultimately to do most for the development and responsibility of our representative form of government. Those who believe that State issues are important enough not only to deserve but to

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command the attention of the great body of voters will urge the separation of State and Federal elections. Those, on the other hand, who believe that the essence of our Government consists in part in comparing State and Federal issues and holding a true balance between them, and who also believe that the great danger in representative government is scattering the attention of the voters and allowing them to become indifferent by calling upon them to vote too often, will advocate putting State and Federal elections at the same time.

Wanted—a Statesman

THE OUTLOOK believes—

That the purpose of the Eighteenth Amendment was the destruction of the legalized liquor traffic.

That the destruction of the legalized liquor traffic represents a tremendous political and economic advance.

That there still remains a vast liquor problem which must be solved by social methods.

That in the pursuit of this end it is illegitimate to break down or infringe upon the hard-won guaranties which assure us the protection of our homes from invasion.

That the problem of the home brewer and the home wine-maker falls within the field of personal temperance rather than public law.

That the liquor question will never be solved rightly until an accurate line has been drawn between what can be accomplished by prohibition and what can be accomplished by temperance.

That the crying needs of the hour are for honest enforcement of the original purpose of the Eighteenth Amendment and constructive social statesmanship in the field of temperance.

What statesman, what thinker, what citizen, will come forward with a constructive suggestion?

The Outlook proposes to ask this question, in and out of season, until the answer is found.

Tax Reduction or Debt Reduction ?

IN one respect it pays to be generous. That is, in estimating possible strains on the public treasury. If the country is going to be disappointed, it is better to expect little and have much in its coffers than to expect much and have little or less than nothing at all.

At least that is the principle upon which Secretary Mellon, of the Treasury Department, seems to have worked. As a consequence, the American people have the pleasant problem of deciding what to do with the surplus. The Democratic leaders in Congress, Mr. Garner in the House and Mr. Simmons in the Senate, want to use this surplus by making a great reduction of taxes. The amount is something like half a billion dollars. That simply means to cut off the surplus by reducing the Government's income. To a certain extent reducing taxes may increase the income, but that is not the purpose of the Democratic proposals.

There are two objections:

One is that there may not, after all, be such a surplus as we expect. Revenues have a way of falling off below estimates. Another objection—and one perhaps more serious—is that a sweeping tax reduction would make impossible an otherwise possible reduction of the National debt. Now, when the country is prosperous and when taxes have been already very considerably reduced, is the time when debt reduction can be most easily made. If we are going to make additional reductions in our debt, now is the time to plan them.

The Fall War Game

SIT behind the coaches' bench at one of the big football games—if you can get a seat in that coveted section—and notice how the field generals call out their men for action:

"Brown! McAndrew! Warm up!"

The members of the squad chosen for the scrimmage line leap into action, practice passes and falling on the ball, run up and down—faces set in grim lines, eyes glancing seriously at the shifting center of conflict. There is no joking about it; the business is in dead earnest.

Scrimmage? Skirmish, rather. Football, for all that it is sport, has devel-

oped the psychological elements of organized combat, and even acquired some of its phraseology of field tactics and strategy. Marshal Foch, of France, on his visit to America, witnessed one of the big games at New Haven. At the end of the first quarter one of his aides, who had been silent all through the moments of play, snapped out the laconic comment: "*Sont diables!*" And at the end of the first half, the Chief of the Allied Supreme Command is said to have remarked, "Now I understand the attacking drive of the American Army."

No other nation has shown a tendency to evolve anything like this direct man-to-man and mass-to-mass test of strength. Out of the old Rugby game, with its open running and no interference, its permission of passing during a run, and its general principle of favoring individual skill, the people of the United States have made a game of unified team play that is distinctive and unique. The forward pass and other modifications of the rules in recent years have not altered this basic character of the game. No other people shows a taste for such a contest of matched forces. The ancient Romans might have developed something like it—if it had occurred to them—and bucked the line with brass helmets. But football, with its combination of plunging backs and surging lines, corresponds to something fundamental in American instincts which it expresses and satisfies.

For that reason there is a growing disposition to over-nationalize the game—to match the East against the West and to build up gradually to a climax of competition for a continental championship. That would be to carry the logic of the college leagues too far, and to establish a superorganized sport. The trend needs to be recognized and forestalled, if possible. The saner way is to continue the traditional system of regional rivalries of college against college, university against university. To go further is to give undue emphasis to what is, after all, only an unusually dramatic and picturesque game and to put unwarranted strain on boys in their years of training for their real careers. Yet the inclination, in this time of country-wide consolidation along all lines, may prove hard to resist.

William James once wrote that the world needs a moral equivalent for war. America advances football. Even to the victors looting the field of the vanquished, the substitute is complete.