

force as a bargaining point, than he would by staying home; and his absence, among other things, would certainly mean that Britain's interests and desires would rank much lower at the table than those of de Gaulle—who, with a nuclear force that is insignificant compared to Britain's, has given an impressive example of how useful a bargaining point such a force can be.

Beyond these arguments, however, is a good old-fashioned one which, as formulated by the *Economist*, seems unanswerable: "Any country will try to lay its hands on weapons it needs to protect its interests until the moment arrives when it feels it can safely entrust this task to some larger community of which it is a part. So long as there is any serious danger that the NATO alliance is not really moving in the direction of becoming such an all-embracing community, it is a perfectly reasonable insurance policy for a British government to spend rather less than one per cent of the national income in trying to equip itself with the Polaris submarines that might just possibly deter . . . a Russian threat to bombard an isolated and otherwise unprotected Britain."

It is too soon to say whether Prime Minister Wilson will eventually come to see the strength of this argument, particularly in view of Khrushchev's departure from the Kremlin. But he will have to make the decision fairly quickly, along with another of equal gravity. Under heavy pressure from West Germany, the United States has made it plain that a British decision on the multilateral NATO force must be forthcoming within the next two or three months. Presumably one should expect a negative reply; for where the Conservative government was merely doubtful of the MLF's merits, the Labour Party is dead set against it. Yet in this case, Labour's position seems not only puzzling but incoherent. Its greatest single objection to the multilateral force is the possibility that the Germans might thereby get a finger on the nuclear trigger. Not only is that precisely what the plan was designed to avoid, but Labour itself is advocating a policy that is more apt to bring about just this eventuality; a major point in Labour's defense

platform is the demand that all of NATO's member countries, including West Germany, be given a much stronger voice in nuclear targeting and planning. If Wilson is right in saying that his plan would put a German finger on the "safety catch" rather than on the trigger, that is no less true of the multilateral force he opposes.

**T**HIS TIME, the weight of the counterarguments might be too much for Wilson. While the Pentagon would not be displeased to see Great Britain withdraw from the nuclear race, it would be deeply angered if Britain should turn down the MLF, which has become cardinal to American policy. Washington has already threatened to make a bilateral arrangement with West Germany along MLF lines in the event of a British veto. Whether or not Wilson takes the threat seriously, he must at least reckon with the sentiment behind it. Unlike the unilateralists in his party, he sets great store

by Britain's special relationship with the United States—a good deal more, perhaps, than some of those he refers to as grouse-moor Gaullists. Foreign Secretary Patrick Gordon Walker would scarcely be furthering one of the central points in Labour's policy if, on his imminent visit to Washington, he should come prepared simply to say "No."

It is also possible that Wilson's intention is not to pronounce a "Yes" or "No" but to bargain and above all to bid for time. He has promised the British electorate a hundred days of invigorating action, but his capacity to stir the nation to a new dynamic course is considerably limited by his precarious hold on power. He has put forward a number of programs and made many promises on his way to power. But now, in trying to anticipate his course, it is perhaps better to remember not so much his pronouncements, which throughout his career have varied, but his opportunism, which has been constant.

## Signs of Things to Come

H. G. NICHOLAS

**B**YOND the obvious fact that Labour has succeeded in establishing its first government since 1951, the most significant aspect of the British election figures is the performance of the Liberal Party. Consider the following figures describing its record in the last four elections:

	Popular Vote	M.P.s Elected
1951	730,551	6
1955	722,402	6
1959	1,640,761	6
1964	3,093,316	9

Essentially, these tell the same story of a Liberal revival. This is most evident in the popular vote, least evident in the membership of the House of Commons. (The explanation of this paradox requires no elaboration; it is the consistent penalization of a third party under both the British and American electoral systems.) Had the Liberals contested more seats this October (they ran

only 366 out of a possible 630 candidates), their popular following would have been even more evident; it would have been of the order of at least 4.5 million, i.e., fifteen per cent of the total vote, or the equivalent of forty per cent of the Labour vote. In addition to the seats they won, in fifty-five other constituencies they moved up to second place, thus preparing themselves for a further advance next time.

Put this side by side with Labour's performance over the same period:

	Popular Vote	M.P.s Elected
1951	13,948,385	296
1955	12,405,251	277
1959	12,216,166	258
1964	12,205,576	317

Here the figures are equally eloquent. Despite an increase in the electorate at the average rate of a million a decade, Labour's popular vote has steadily declined from its

high point in 1951. True, the decline in seats has been arrested and popular dissatisfaction with the thirteenth year of Tory rule has enabled Labour to edge into first place in the House of Commons. But it is a hairs-breadth victory, the tightest in British electoral history, the sparest endorsement that any majority party has ever had. The new face assumed by Wilson's so-called "classless" leadership has not arrested the steady attrition of support for the workers' party, an attrition that closely parallels the decline in the numbers of manual workers and the steady rise of the salariat.

In other words, Wilson's "new look" has not erased the old image of Labour as a party lettered to a hidebound trade unionism and an old-fashioned socialism of "fair shares" and public ownership, rather than an expanding economy and greater diffusion of property.

**T**HIS IS CONFIRMED by another significant feature of the results. What were the areas in which Labour picked up its gains? They were mainly metropolitan areas like Liverpool, Glasgow, and the poorer London boroughs, where the old type of Labour voter reared amid poverty, unemployment, and slums still lingers on, in his psychology if not in his immediate economic conditions. In the "New Britain" of high wages and full employment associated with the newer industries, few significant Labour gains were recorded. Indeed in the industrial Midlands, the most pronounced area of the new affluence, there was a sizable swing to the Conservatives.

A fourth consecutive Tory victory might have served to accelerate the wheels of history, complete Labour's electoral bankruptcy, and force a swift realignment of the Labour and Liberal Parties in a new undoctriinaire radical grouping. But the electorate, by a mere 1.2 per cent of the popular vote, declined to purchase a second term for Sir Alec Douglas-Home at such a price. Instead, it indicated unmistakably that it means to keep Harold Wilson's Labour government on the shortest possible leash.

In such a situation, there is always a temptation for a certain type of Tory to remember that the British

constitution still provides the House of Lords with a suspensive veto over legislation. The Tory-dominated second chamber could play havoc with a Labour government that hangs by a thread. But in reality this is one of those ultimate weapons that would wipe out its launchers along with its target. To unseat a Labour government by obstruction in the Lords would be to present Wilson with the ideal issue on which to fight his next election—"the peers versus the people." Surely Sir Alec did not resign his own earldom for that.

In fact, for reasons of practical politics, nobody is going to want to unseat Wilson just yet. The Liberals, a poor party, must have time to replenish their modest war chest. The Tories have to devise some way of revamping their leadership without too blatant a violation of the Queensberry rules. For the next twelve months it is probably acci-

dents rather than plots that Wilson has most to fear. Even eugenics must be considered, since it appears that Tory MPs enjoy longer life and better health than their Labour opposite numbers. Influenza on the night of a crucial vote or mortalities among MPs in marginal constituencies could have immediate and grave consequences for the day-to-day course of politics.

**B**UT WHATEVER may happen in the short run to ease or aggravate the Labour government's plight, one thing is sure. Unless Wilson can broaden his popular support by devising a new radicalism that accords with long-term trends in the make-up and attitudes of the British electorate, Labour's possession of office will not save the party from slipping still lower in public esteem. That is one issue which has been decided beyond question in the British general election of 1964.

## Who Was Bill Miller?

BARBARA CARTER

**"T**HE REPUBLICANS," William E. Miller keeps saying, "are on the threshold of victory." Johnson may have the press, the newspapers, the columnists, and the magazines, but Goldwater has the people. Yet to one who has spent a little time on the campaign tour with him, Miller does not appear to be a man who expects to win; he does not even seem particularly dismayed by the thought of losing, though he will certainly keep on swinging with everything he's got right to the end.

Miller is a professional at this game. The bad breaks he meets along the way—it was announced, for instance, that the Goldwater strategists had written off Pennsylvania just after he spent a day campaigning there—he takes in his stride. He seems able to ignore the note of desperation that crops up occasionally among the amateurs back in the ranks. At an executives' lunch in Chicago, for example, he was asked if the Walter Jenkins scandal was "the news break we've

been waiting for" or if Miller had "any further proof connecting Johnson with Bobby Baker," without seeming to notice that such questions suggested that the ammunition provided by the Republicans so far had not been quite enough. Though he calls the press "unfair," he is friendly enough with its representatives, playing bridge with them at the end of the day in the front cabin of his Electra. Everyone is just doing his job, and the reporters, jouncing along in a bus at the end of a motorcade, discuss, with a relish for minor historical facts, what became of other Vice-Presidential candidates who ran and lost.

Miller, as everyone knows, was not planning to run for office again until the Vice-Presidential opportunity came along. He barely won his last election to Congress from a district in upstate New York. Indeed, if it were not for the votes he got in a place called Tonawanda, Miller might not have been in a position to accept the Vice-Presi-